

No. 26

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# ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY



## JACK LIGHTFOOT'S HARD LUCK

OR A LIGHTNING PLAY  
IN THE NINTH



Finding his way blocked by the crouching second baseman, Jack took a magnificent flying leap over him that promised to land him on the bag.







**Publishers' Note.** "Teach the American boy how to become an athlete, and lay the foundation for a Constitution greater than that of the United States."—Wise sayings from "Tip Top." There has never been a time when the boys of this great country took so keen an interest in all manly and health-giving sports as they do to-day. As proof of this witness the record-breaking throngs that attend college struggles on the gridiron, as well as athletic and baseball games, and other tests of endurance and skill. In a multitude of other channels this love for the "life strenuous" is making itself manifest, so that, as a nation, we are rapidly forging to the front as seekers of honest sport. Recognizing this "handwriting on the wall," we have concluded that the time has arrived to give this vast army of young enthusiasts a publication devoted exclusively to invigorating out-door life. We feel we are justified in anticipating a warm response from our sturdy American boys, who are sure to revel in the stirring phases of sport and adventure, through which our characters pass from week to week.

# ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

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## JACK LIGHTFOOT'S HARD LUCK;

OR,

### A Lightning Triple Play in the Ninth.

By MAURICE STEVENS.

#### CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

**Jack Lightfoot**, the best all-round athlete in Cranford or vicinity, a lad clear of eye, clean of speech, and, after he had conquered a few of his faults, possessed of a faculty for *doing things* while others were talking; that by degrees caused him to be looked upon as the natural leader in all the sports Young America delights in—a boy who in learning to conquer himself put the power into his hands to wrest victory from others.

**Tom Lightfoot**, Jack's cousin, and sometimes his rival; though their striving for the mastery was always of the friendly, generous kind. Tom was called the "Book-Worm" by his fellows, on account of his love for studying such secrets of nature as practical observers have discovered and published; so that he possessed a fund of general knowledge calculated to prove useful when his wandering spirit took him abroad into strange lands.

**Ned Skeen**, of impulsive, nervous temperament; but a good friend of Jack's.

**Nat Kimball**, an undersized fellow, whose hobby was the study of *jiu-jitsu*, and who had a dread of germs.

**Lafe Lampton**, a big, hulking chap, with an ever present craving for something to eat. Lafe always had his appetite along, and proved a staunch friend of our hero through thick and thin.

**Bob Brewster**, **Phil Kirtland**, **Jubal Marlin**, some of Jack's friends.

**Reel Snodgrass**, who came from India, and possessed considerable skill as a magician.

**Delancy Shelton**, the son of a millionaire, and between whom and Jack there was little love lost.

**Millard Rice**, the clever Mildale pitcher.

**Greg Silver**, captain of the Mildale's, and a fellow who gave Jack much trouble.

**Nellie Conner**, who possessed the prettiest blue eyes in Cranford, according to Jack.

**Mrs. Lightfoot**, Jack's mother.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### IN THE SHED ROOM.

"Now, see here; wouldn't this bore you?"

Lafe Lampton held up a sheet of paper on which he had been scribbling.

He saw that Jack Lightfoot had an undeniable case of the "blues," and he fancied that a little humor would be as good as a stimulant. They were together in the shed room at Jack's home, and they had been talking of a recent defeat on the diamond.

"See here; how's this? 'Bill had a billboard. Bill also had a board bill. The board bill bored Bill so that Bill sold the billboard to pay the board bill. After Bill sold his billboard to pay his board bill the board bill no longer bored Bill. Perhaps the board bill was longer than the billboard. Or perhaps the billboard bored Bill more than the board bill bored Bill.'"

Jack laughed; more at the ludicrous grin that Lafe twisted into his face than at this clever play of words.

"That's good," he said. "How's this: 'If a woodchuck would chuck wood, how much wood would a woodchuck chuck?'"

He was stooping with paint brush in hand and ap-



plying the paint to a new boat—a beauty, which he expected to be the fastest thing of its kind on Cranford Lake.

He had been working at it there in the shed room at intervals all summer, and it was now all done but the painting.

Lafe glanced at the boat.

"What you goin' to name her?"

"I don't know," said Jack. "What do you suggest? Tom suggested *The Lady of the Lake*."

"Got that out of a book, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'd call it *The Hummer*, or *The Flyer*, or *The Winner*, or something of that kind. How would *Greyhound* do?"

"Your suggestions are just as much like you as Tom's was like him."

"When I came down to see you yesterday I found Delancy here. He said he'd heard about your boat and wanted to see her. I took the liberty of showing her to him. 'She's a beaut,' he says, 'and I'd like to buy her as soon as she's done.' You might get a good price out of him."

Jack's fair face flushed.

Sell that boat, into which he had put his heart and his skill, to a fellow like Delancy Shelton?

"Why not?" Lafe asked, interpreting the look. "That is, if you'd be willing to sell her at all."

"I'll never sell her to Delancy Shelton! It would make me sick every time I saw him out in her."

"Well, it wouldn't be pleasant," Lafe admitted, "to see Delancy and Reel Snodgrass beating every boat with that one, for in my opinion she's going to be a flyer."

Jack stood off with the paint brush in his hand, and looked at the trim vessel, with its shapely lines and sharp prow.

"She's built for speed," he said, admiringly. "She'll go all right, or I'm mistaken."

"Oh, she'll go," said Lafe, munching at a peanut; "and it would sort of grind a fellow to see Delancy and Reel speeding her on the lake. But what I was thinking of is, that Delancy is willing to pay well for about anything he takes a fancy to; and I could see that he'd fallen in love with the boat."

"He can't have her!" said Jack, with a snap of his jaws and a glitter of his blue-gray eyes.

He disliked Delancy, and his manner showed it; yet he did not dislike him more than Lafe did.

"How's your mother to-day?" Lafe asked, changing the subject. "I think you said she's better?"

Jack's face brightened.

"Oh, a good deal better! I must go and see her now, too; she may be needing something."

He put down the brush and left the shed room.

Lafe cracked open another peanut and put the kernels in his mouth, and shifted lazily in his easy-chair—Jack's easy-chair, by the writing desk, while his bright blue eyes roved over the boat.

"Too bad that those defeats cut Jack up so!" he mused. "He's too sensitive. If he's got a weak point, that's it. I take things easier."

He shifted again, munching, and still looking at the boat.

"That's why, I suppose, I wouldn't make a good leader for a ball team or an athletic club. I'd keep putting everything off to the last minute, and trust to luck; and then, if my team got done up, I'd laugh about it; and say: 'All right, we'll try 'em again!' But Jack isn't built that way. He worries about things. But what's the use?" He thrust his hands lazily into his pockets. "Life's too short to worry. If I worried I'd miss a lot of fun and be as thin as—as Jack is."

Jack came in again, his face brighter than when he left.

"She's ever so much better!" he cried. "I think she'll be up again and as well as ever in another week. It was too bad that she got sick while we were away."

Lafe glanced at him, burrowing his hands into his pockets.

"Are you worrying about her, or about those ball games?"

"Both."

"Well, she's getting better, and that makes that all right; and I wouldn't worry about those confounded ball games a minute. If we fellows had come back from that outing in the Maine woods in good condition we wouldn't have been defeated."

"That's so, I guess; I hope it is."

"You couldn't pitch in that game against Tidewater, and Phil let the Tigers hammer him."

"But I pitched against Mildale. Think of that! And Mildale isn't half the nine that the Tigers are."

"Forget it!" said Lafe, philosophically.

"I'd like to."

"We're going against Mildale again, day after to-morrow, and there your chance comes to get even."

"But think of it!" said Jack, his face flushing again. "To be defeated by Mildale, the weakest nine in the Four-Town League! That's what cuts me. And we can't say Phil did it this time; I was pitching that day."

"Yes; but think of the condition you were in! Think



of what happened up in the Maine woods only last week!\* You came back from there as stiff as an old cart horse. You were stiff and sore all over. Remember what a time we had with the canoes in those rapids, and how wet you got in that cold water—a regular soaking—just when you were as hot as mustard from that tug with the river. You went into that ice water all covered with sweat. What do you expect, old man? Do you expect to be supple and limber, after a thing like that? You're dead lucky—and we all are—that you and all of us didn't come home sick; we're lucky that we were able to get home at all. That's what I say; you weren't in any condition to pitch, and we weren't in any condition to play. And so we got whipped by the poorest nine in the league. But it won't be so next time. We'll wallop 'em, day after to-morrow."

He looked at Jack anxiously.

"You're about all right again?" he asked.

"Yes; only I'm pretty well tired out."

"Tired out because you've been waiting on your mother and worrying over her?"

"Yes, partly."

"Stop worrying! Stop it!"

"That's easy enough to say."

"But I don't worry."

"Your mother isn't sick; and you aren't the captain of the nine, and the pitcher that went up into the air at Mildale."

"I shouldn't worry, nohow."

Jack laughed.

"I believe you. You're too fat to worry."

"I'm fat because I don't worry."

"And because you eat so much."

Lafe laughed in his easy way; and when Lafe laughed the laugh was so bubbling and infectious that whoever heard him felt like joining in with him.

Jack laughed now simply because Lafe did; he couldn't help it.

"Lafe, you're all right! I'd like to have your easy temperament."

"You can have it," said Lafe, "or one like it. Just stop worrying; then you'll eat all you'll hold, and you'll sleep like a log, and you'll laugh and grow fat."

"But didn't those defeats worry you? Think of it! We were at the top of the heap! And then, to have that happen! Tidewater wasn't so bad; but to go down before Mildale!"

"Well, now that wasn't so bad, either, when you

look at it right. That new pitcher they've got is a wonder."

"About the best now in the league."

"With the exception of yourself, and Kid Casey, of Tidewater, he is the best."

"He laid it all over me the other day."

"But he'll never do it again. You wasn't in condition and oughtn't to have been in the box."

"I know it, and wouldn't have gone into the box if Phil would have pitched; but after being defeated at Tidewater he got mad and wouldn't do anything, simply because some of the boys said some sharp things about that defeat."

"So you had to pitch, and you weren't in condition even to pitch horseshoes. Your arms were stiff, and so was your whole body."

"That's right," Jack agreed. "The trouble is that such things don't count. The thing that counts is that we were beat and I was largely the cause of it."

"But Mildale will tuck its tail between its legs and run like a scared dog, when we get after them day after to-morrow."

"I hope so."

"I know it!"

He took out another peanut and cracked it open.

"Funny about that new pitcher!" he remarked, as he dropped the kernels into his mouth. "He makes me think of you."

"That so?"

"Yes. A little while ago no one thought of him much as a pitcher, though he's been doing good work. Their regular pitcher fell down, and they put this fellow in just to try him; and he proved a wonder. Last year, you know, none of us fellows dreamed that you'd be on the slab for Cranford this year. I knew you were rather hot stuff in a good many ways, but even I didn't expect that. And now look at the case. You're not only the pitcher, but the captain, and the best ball player we've got in the town, barring none."

Jack smiled at Lafe's friendly enthusiasm.

"You're kind," he said.

"Nit. It's not that. Simply the truth. You rose like a rocket."

"And came down like the stick—at Mildale."

"You rose like a rocket simply because you had the stuff, the fire, the gunpowder in you, to carry you up. Don't you suppose every fellow knows naturally when a leader appears? All our fellows did, when you appeared."

He chewed thoughtfully.

"All except Phil Kirtland, of course, and a few of

\*See last week's issue, No. 25, "Jack Lightfoot Afloat; or, The Cruise of the Canvas Canoes."



that kind," he added; "and the only thing that troubled Phil was that he was jealous of you and wanted to be captain himself."

"What else do you know about that Mildale pitcher?" Jack asked, putting the question to stop this stream of eulogy as much as anything else.

"Nothing much. He's just one of the Mildale boys. He was only a substitute, when the season opened. But he had the stuff in him, and began to show the fellows what he could do, just as you did. That's the only thing that wins—the ability to do. People may talk all they please, but that's it and nothing else. There's a chance for every fellow that's got the right stuff in him. If he becomes the best pitcher in the nine, or the best anything else in the nine, he'll get that position sooner or later just as sure as fate. He's bound to."

Jack believed this fully.

And not only did Jack and Lafe believe it, but experience shows that it is so. In the great leagues it is not favoritism nor social position, nor anything but the ability to play ball successfully, that puts players into those positions and gives them the salaries they get.

This is shown by the fact that as soon as they cease to be able to play winning baseball they lose their positions. Nothing can keep them in the nines when they lose what Lafe Lampton called "stuff."

It is so everywhere. The boys and the men who can "deliver the goods" are the boys and the men who are wanted. Let no one make any mistake about this. If you want to be anything and do anything you've got to prove your worthiness and your ability. And the way to make people believe you can do it is to do it; they will never believe it otherwise. You must show them that you've got "the stuff in you."

## CHAPTER II.

### SOME PERSONAL HISTORY.

Lafe Lampton went away after a while.

"A friend worth having," thought Jack, as he heard Lafe whistling along the street and saw him sauntering with hands thrust into his pockets.

He took up the paint brush again, but put it down, after giving the new boat a few touches.

The thing that was worrying Jack and giving him the "blues," was something more than Lafe had guessed.

Lafe was, with perhaps the exception of Tom Light-

foot, Jack's closest friend. But there are some things we do not tell even to our best friends.

As Jack sat there, looking at the boat and thinking, he heard the mail train come in.

His face flushed and he sprang to his feet. Taking his cap from its nail he left the shed room. As he did so he heard his mother's voice. She, too, had been listening for that train.

"I wish you'd go up to the post office, Jack; the train is in!"

He knew what that meant—knew how she had been waiting and longing for the arrival of a certain letter.

"All right," he said. "Is there anything I can do for you before I go?"

"Only hurry," she called.

"I'll be right back, as soon as the mail is distributed."

He passed down the walk, let himself out at the paling gate, and hastened in the direction of the post office.

Off on the right, the beautiful lake dimpled and smiled in the warm summer sunshine. Boats were moving on it, some being sailboats. Toward the eastern end of the lake, over Tiger Point, he could see the smoke of the little lake steamer.

Jack gave but a glance at the familiar lake; and, though he passed several friends, he only nodded to them and hurried on.

The mail was not distributed when he reached the office, and he waited until the last letter had been put into the boxes.

There was something in his box, but—it was not the expected letter; and Jack's heart sank, when he saw that all the letters were out.

He took the package and letter that were in the box and hurried homeward.

"Did it come, Jack?" his mother called to him, as soon as she heard him in the lower room.

"N-o!" he said, slowly, disliking to bear the unwelcome information.

Then he went up to her room.

He had expected to find her distressed, possibly crying; and was surprised, therefore, to see the brave face she displayed.

"Jack," she said, as she took the letter and package he gave her, "we'll have to draw some of the money out of the savings bank."

That was a thing she had fought against doing, and he knew it.

She had some money in the Cranford Savings Bank, and a little more invested as stock in a business enterprise at Cardiff. The interest from the bank money



and the earnings from the Cardiff investment furnished her the means of living.

A dull business year had made it impossible for the Cardiff stock to earn anything. The principal part of her living had come from this Cardiff stock. This year it had not yielded a dollar, though the chances were that it would yield something soon. But that did not help in the present pinch of need.

There was one other source of income, which had been reaching her during the past four months. This was a monthly letter, which had arrived with great regularity.

Its contents had been enough to offset the loss from the Cardiff stock, so that she had been enabled to live as heretofore.

But the letter which she had been looking for—if it had come it would have been the fifth—was now more than two weeks overdue.

During ten days of those two weeks she had been ill in bed, in care of a doctor, and, as a consequence, her expenses had been heavy. She was in debt to the doctor, to the druggist, and to some of the store-keepers.

Most unfortunately she had fallen sick while Jack was away in the Maine woods. It gave him a pang to know this. But he had, since his return, spent both his days and his nights almost wholly at her bedside, only leaving one afternoon to play in the game with Mildale on the Cranford grounds.

Jack had done some thinking on his way home from the post office; but he was not ready to speak of it, and sat down by the bed.

"You heard what I said, Jack? I'll have to draw some of the money out of the savings bank."

"Do you think those letters have been coming from Uncle Steven?" he asked, looking at her.

"Why, I've thought so, Jack."

"And I've thought so."

The Uncle Steven mentioned was Mrs. Lightfoot's uncle, who resided in New York. He was in business there, and was said to be prosperous, but he wrote seldom and never came to the place at all. Mrs. Lightfoot had not seen his face in years.

This Uncle Steven had advised her to invest in the Cardiff stock. He had made investments in it himself. Hence, it was certain that he knew it was not now paying anything, and equally certain, as he had acted as her agent for the purchase of her stock, that he knew just how much she usually received from it.

As the letters containing those inclosures came from

New York, these other things had made her think the money was being sent by her uncle.

Yet—and this was the singular thing about it—no written communications came with the money, and there was nothing to show from whom it came, as it came always in an ordinary letter, unregistered.

"Of course this last letter may have been stolen on the way," said Jack, "as they were never registered. But that isn't likely, for the others came all right. It simply hasn't been sent this time. You wouldn't want to write to Uncle Steven about it?"

"Oh, no—no!" she said. "I may be mistaken, you know, in thinking he sent them; and then he would think that I was begging for help."

Mrs. Lightfoot had a not unnatural pride, which made her loath to ask help of anyone. Uncle Steven was much older than she, and he had been opposed to her marriage with the man of her choice, Jack's father. In addition, what she had known of him told her that in matters of business he was cold and hard. It had been something of a surprise to her, when the remittances began to come; but she accepted them with tears of thankfulness, thinking they indicated a warming of the heart of Uncle Steven. And she had begun to have a better opinion of him than she had ever had before.

She knew that he was peculiar, and in that way she accounted for the fact that he sent no letters with the inclosures.

Another thing which had made her think he had sent the money was that she had written him after the receipt of each letter, acknowledging its receipt and thanking him for it.

That he had not noticed these letters from her was only another proof to her that he was "peculiar."

"Jack," she said now, "if Uncle Steven hadn't been sending those remittances wouldn't he have written and told me of my mistake, when I wrote and thanked him?"

"I don't know," he answered; "for, you see, I have never seen him or known him."

"That's so," she said, and sighed.

He looked at her earnestly.

"You don't—don't suppose that—that father——"

She became so white that he stopped.

He caught up the glass of water from the stand and sprang to her.

She pushed it away.

"I—I'm all right, Jack; just a little faint, that's all. What you suggested about your father rather startled me—upset me."



"I'll not speak of it again," he promised, putting down the glass and looking at her anxiously.

"But I rather think I want you to, Jack," she urged, trembling. "I know what you were going to say—going to suggest—that it may have been your father who sent that money."

"Of course it couldn't have been," he admitted, hopelessly; "he must be dead."

He was anxious, and sorry he had said anything, seeing how pale she was.

She tried to smile.

"I couldn't be as brave as I am, Jack, if"—she caught her breath—"if I really had given him up for dead. The chances are all against his being alive, I know; but I make myself think he must still be living. It's been six years now—six years next month, since we heard from him, and more than seven years since he went away."

"Yes," said Jack, softly, still sorry that he had introduced the subject.

He took her thin, white hand in his own hard, brown one, and held it close, and she smiled when she felt that pressure of his fingers.

"He went to the Klondike, you know, Jack. That was in 1897, when so many men were going, you know; the year of the great gold excitement. The Klondike gold fever caught him, as it did so many others, and I couldn't induce him not to go.

"He went first to Seattle, you know, and then on to the Klondike. There he barely made a living. I've got the letters he wrote that first year. I wish you'd get them for me, Jack; they're right there in the drawer."

Jack got up softly, took the little packet of letters from the drawer, and placed it in her hands. It was a small packet, tied with ribbon that was now faded. The tears came into her eyes as she took the letters.

"Do you think you're strong enough to talk about this now?" he asked, anxiously.

It was not the first time that his mother had spoken to him thus concerning his father; and he was always pleased to talk with her on the subject; but she seemed almost too weak now for the effort.

"I'm strong enough, Jack," she said, beginning to untie the packet.

She spread the letters out on the bedclothes. She was sitting up, propped with pillows which Jack had placed carefully under her head and shoulders. He saw the letters and their postmarks. They were from Dawson City, Circle City, and other places in the far-off Alaskan gold fields.

She began to read some of them, and he sat there watching her with loving anxiety.

"When he could do nothing much there, Jack," she went on, "you know he fell in with that man—that sailor, who had the map of the South Sea Island; and afterward they sailed away together, bound for that island, with a small crew of desperate adventurers—he calls them desperate adventurers, you know!"

She looked at the letter which spoke thus of the crew of the little schooner in which John Lightfoot, Jack's father, had sailed out into the unknown.

"It was a desperate adventure," she exclaimed, the tears brimming her eyes, "and from the day he sailed we have never heard a word from him!"

She put the letter back, sobbing.

The tears were in Jack's eyes, too.

"I wouldn't think about it, mother!" he urged, anxiously.

She tied the letters together with shaking fingers, then held the packet in her hands as she sat propped by the pillows.

"It is six years next month since your father sailed out into the Pacific in that little crazy schooner with those reckless men. I have refused to believe that he is dead—refused to believe but that he would come back to us one of these days, and perhaps come with the money he hoped to get by that wild voyage. There was a pearl island somewhere in the South Pacific, that sailor told him; and he believed that if it could be reached every member of that desperate crew would come back rich as millionaires. It was a crazy adventure. If I could have seen your father I might have persuaded him not to go, I think; but I knew nothing about it until this letter came, and then he had gone, and we've heard nothing since. Six long years, Jack!"

She motioned to him, and he put the little packet back in the drawer.

When he turned round to the bed again he saw that she had also brushed her tears away.

"If you knew your father, Jack, as well as I did, you couldn't think it would be possible for him to be so near as New York, and send money in that strange way, and not come here to see us and live with us. No, no—that money did not come from your father! And yet——"

That look of pain swept across her face again.

"And yet if I could think he did that it would be proof that he is still living. I wish I could think that he sent it. But I know he didn't."

"Then it was Uncle Steven."



"Yes, it was Uncle Steven; and I have been expecting every day to receive another letter, or, rather, another inclosure. It hasn't come, Jack. And now we must face the truth. We shall have to draw money from the savings bank, and I did hope we shouldn't have to do that."

Jack's face brightened. He was ready to mention his plan.

Many times in that past six years Jack had had plans, all of which his mother had stoutly vetoed.

His first plan, formed more than five years ago now, when he first learned that his mother needed money, was for him to offer himself to Norwell Strawn, the rich storekeeper, as errand boy in his store.

His mother had vetoed that. She wanted him to go to school and have the advantages of other boys.

At various times Jack had broached other plans similar to that, and she had refused to listen to any of them.

Then he had urged her to let him find work of some kind during his vacations.

But there was nothing he could get to do that was promising, for summer was the dull season in Cranford. Some of the mills shut down during the summer months. He had been offered a place on a fishing vessel that sailed out of Tidewater; but his mother would not hear of that for an instant.

"No, Jack," she had always said, "I want you to grow up like other boys, and not have to drudge your young life out and become prematurely broken down and old. You will be a man by and by, and then I shall expect you to do something and become something. But before that time comes I expect to keep you in the very best schools there are, and I want you to have your vacations, like other boys."

And because of this Jack was what we have found him—one of the brightest students in Cranford, one of the strongest and sturdiest of the Cranford youths, and a keen athlete; yet kind-hearted, true, ambitious, sensitive, with a just sort of pride in himself, and a determination to make a career for himself that would be big and broad enough to satisfy even his mother's ambitions.

But now he felt that something must be done; and he was ready to suggest something, and made the suggestion with pride.

"You know that boat, mother!"

"It's a beauty, Jack. I was looking at it just before I was taken sick the day after you and Tom started with the other boys for the Maine woods."

"Well, Lafe gave me an idea a while ago. Delancy

Shelton has taken a fancy to that boat, and I'm going to sell it to him, if he'll buy it."

"Jack, I don't want you to do that!" she protested.

"But why not? I've made it in my odd times, and if I can get anything for it we'll be just that much ahead. Don't draw any money from the savings bank until I see if I can sell the boat."

"But I don't wish you to sell it, Jack. I want you to have the boat for yourself; you were building it for yourself, and I know that you want to keep it. You remember what you told me about it. And you couldn't get very much for it, anyway. Cranford is full of boats and boatbuilders."

"I could get enough to pay off those bills," he said, cheerily, "and leave something over."

"Have you been talking to Lafe about our money troubles?" was her anxious question.

"Not a word."

"That's good. I hardly thought you had."

"I never speak to anyone about our private affairs."

"Well, you shouldn't. We're not beggars, Jack. If I wanted to tell him about it, Tom's father would give me money, or lend it to me."

"And so would Tom."

"But we want to take care of ourselves, Jack. That's the proper spirit."

Mrs. Lightfoot had a stiff pride.

"I might build other boats like that," said Jack, "if that one sells, even if they wouldn't bring much. Perhaps I could pick up a good many dollars in that way in the course of the year."

He spoke hopefully.

"You're not willing that I should try to get regular work in my vacation, or leave school."

"No, I'm not."

She spoke decidedly.

"Work is honorable, Jack. It's not that. But you mustn't leave school, and the school vacations are short. You study hard and you get somewhat run down. You'd lose more than you'd gain if you worked hard through the vacations and then studied hard all through the school year. That's why I say I don't want you to try for vacation work. Thank goodness, up to this time we haven't felt the need of anything of the kind!"

Her determined talk seemed to brighten her.

"Perhaps you'd better wait a while before offering

"I shall certainly do it if the money doesn't come in the evening mail, mother," said Jack, with determination.



## CHAPTER III.

## JACK'S HUMILIATION.

It was not because Delancy Shelton was rich that Jack disliked him. Tom Lightfoot was comparatively wealthy, and Tom was a fine fellow, whom everyone admired.

"It's not whether a fellow is rich or poor, but it's what he is!" was Jack's way of putting it.

Judged by that standard, Delancy Shelton was a very poor specimen indeed. Delancy fancied that his money, which he flung round as if it were trash, made him different from other fellows; it gave him a terrible case of the swelled head. But Delancy was weak in other ways, and not only that but vicious.

On several occasions he had shown that he did not like Jack Lightfoot, and that he looked down on Jack because he considered him "poverty-stricken." Every one not very wealthy was "poverty-stricken," in Delancy's imagination.

When the evening mail brought no letter Jack took his way to the hotel where Delancy was stopping. He had, in the meantime, made some inquiries, and found there was no demand for boats, so he was resolved to sell his boat to Delancy for whatever he could get.

This hotel was the Cranford House, and the best in the town. Delancy had two of the best rooms there, and was lavish in his expenditures.

A portion of the time Reel Snodgrass occupied one of the rooms with Delancy, for Reel had become a parasite preying on this foolish, rich, young fellow. Reel pretended a great admiration and fondness for Delancy, but what he liked most was Delancy's money. Almost every one saw that but the dupe himself.

Jack felt rather uncomfortable when he found Reel in Delancy's rooms when he called.

"Aw," drawled Delancy, taking his cigarette from between his lips when Jack came in, "it's—aw—Lightfoot!"

It was as if he had said: "Here comes a yellow dog!"

Jack flushed, and Reel grinned maliciously, for the sneer pleased him.

Jack took a chair by the window, without invitation. The night was warm and the window was open. He glanced about the luxuriously furnished rooms, and at its occupants, who were arrayed in cool, white duck. Jack wore an ordinary dark suit, and a cap, and now held the cap in his hands.

Jack did not intend to waste words; he wanted to get out of there; so he said, promptly:

"Lafe was telling me that you liked my boat and thought you might like to buy it."

Delancy leaned back in his cushioned chair and surveyed Jack with an irritating smile.

"Hard up, eh? Aw—I've been thinking you were, for a long time!"

Reel's tanned face colored with pleasure.

Jack wanted to jump out of his chair and leave the room; but he concluded that was not the way to do business, and so held his temper in check.

"Do you want to buy the boat?" he asked.

"It's a rawther poor thing, don't y' know!" said Delancy, with cutting indifference.

"That wasn't the report Lafe gave me."

"But—aw——" said Delancy, sucking again at his cigarette, "Lafe didn't see that I was—aw—jollying him, y' know—positively giving him the jolly! It's a beastly, clumsy thing, and you ought to know it."

"I don't know it," said Jack, warmly.

Reel laughed.

"Lightfoot, you seem to think you can do any old thing; play ball, run a nine, build boats, and everything else. We've heard, too, that last week you were engaged in romantic rescue work up in the wilds of Maine."

"I don't think I was talking to you!" said Jack, curtly.

"No? Oh, I thought you were. I beg your pardon."

He smiled wickedly and struck a match to light his cigarette.

"I wasn't asking your opinion or your advice. I came here to talk with Mr. Shelton. I understood he said he'd like to buy my boat."

"You'd have to have that boat pulled along by a tug, if you expect it to make any speed," was the shot that Reel fired at him.

Jack rose to his feet. His anger was getting up fast. He had a good, hot temper, which was hard at times to control.

"Aw—sit down, Lightfoot!" said Delancy, superciliously. "Be a gentleman, cawn't you?"

Jack sat down. He was very anxious to make that sale.

"I try to be a gentleman, always. But I didn't come here to be insulted."

"Aw—fellows of your stripe are always fawncying that they're gentlemen, don't y' know, when they're——"

"Do you want to buy the boat?" said Jack.

"Are always fancying that they're gentlemen, y' know, when they're absolutely beggars! Of course,



you're in need of money, or you wouldn't want to sell it."

"Is it anything to you whether I need money or not, if the boat suits you?"

"Aw—perhaps not!" He flicked away the ashes of his cigarette, which had fallen on his white coat. "Aw—perhaps not. But you've been so superior, y' know, in your manner toward us, you'll remember; and now your coming to us shows that you're on your uppers, y' know."

"Haven't I treated you about right—as well as you deserve, and as well as you'd let me? Didn't I risk my life not long ago to catch the thief that knocked you down at Loon Lake and made off with two thousand dollars of your money; and didn't I restore the money to you, with not a dollar of it gone?"

"And ruined my auto, don't y' know! And that auto cost five thousand, don't y' know."

"I saw you riding in it to-day."

"I've had it fixed since you handled it that way, and a pretty penny it cost me, don't y' know."

Jack was silent. He wanted to tell Delancy that he had no more gratitude than a wolf and no more sensitiveness than the hide of a rhinoceros, but he restrained himself.

"Let that pass, then," he said, finally, struggling to keep his temper down. "What will you give me for the boat?" He tried even to smile, though his nerves were jumping.

"Aw—I don't know that I want it—it's a tub, y' know."

"Well, what will you give me for the tub?"

"Aw—if you're very hard up I might let you have twenty dollars."

"Twenty dollars! Not much. The lumber in that boat cost more than that."

"And I presume you owe for it?"

"That's not the question."

"Why don't you go to Tom, if you want money?" sneered Reel.

"I'm not talking to you!" said Jack.

"But I'm talking to you. Why don't you go to Tom?"

"Because Tom doesn't need the boat. Delancy told Lufe that he'd like to buy it. But I won't repeat that. If you want the boat, Delancy, say so."

He was still very anxious to sell. He saw the white face of his mother before him, and he recalled her talk of the afternoon. He could stand insults when he had to.

"What will you—aw—take for the—aw—tub?"

"One hundred and fifty dollars."

"And—aw—how much less?"

"Not a cent less—that boat is worth every cent of two hundred dollars."

"If it's worth that why don't you go out on the street and sell it for that?" sneered Reel. "A thing is worth what it will fetch in the market, and no more; and you know you couldn't get a hundred for it if you put it on the market."

"Do you want it for one hundred and fifty, Delancy?"

"I don't think I do," said Delancy, removing his cigarette and regarding Jack coldly with his pale blue eyes

He saw how anxious Jack was to sell, and it pleased him to humiliate him as much as he could.

"What will you give for it, then?" Jack asked.

He had come there with the intention of selling the boat for whatever he could get.

"I offered you twenty; but I'll raise it to fifty."

Jack hesitated, while a sneering smile spread over Reel's tanned face.

Reel took out a few dollars, which Delancy had loaned him that day. He never repaid Delancy's loans.

"I might lend you ten dollars, Lightfoot, if you're very hard up!" he said, insolently.

Jack's blue-gray eyes flashed with a hidden fire.

"No, thank you; I'm not seeking a loan."

"Or I might give it to you, as a—sort of charity, you know!"

Reel's sneer was so insulting that Jack wanted to jump at him and knock him out of the chair.

"You'll have to make it more than fifty, if you want the boat," he said, speaking only to Delancy.

"Name your lowest figure," said Delancy, toying with him now, with the same sort of pleasure that a cat takes in torturing a mouse by playing with it.

Jack's heart sank.

But again in imagination he saw the white face of his mother, and recalled her attempt at cheerfulness, when he knew that her heart was breaking.

Then he made an offer which he would never have believed he could make.

"I'll take a hundred dollars for it."

"I don't want it," said Delancy, lazily; "not at that figure."

"You won't give a hundred dollars for it—for a boat that's worth two hundred, if it's worth a cent?"

"I—aw—don't think I want it, Lightfoot."

"Well, then," said Jack, desperately, "what will you give for it?"



Delancy seemed to think a moment. He was crazy to own that beautiful boat. And it was not because he clung to money that caused him now to halt. He simply wanted to humiliate Jack Lightfoot. To humiliate Jack he would have gone without the boat—would have done anything.

"Say seventy-five; that's splitting the difference between your offer and mine," he said at last.

Jack's face flushed crimson and then became as pale as a sheet. For a moment his eyes blurred. He understood these fellows only too well. He had made risks and sacrifices for both of them. And this was how they repaid him.

He had a sense of suffocation, even though he was sitting by that open window.

"All right," he said, the words coming slowly; "pay me the money and the boat is yours."

Reel laughed, harshly.

"You are—aw—deuced hard up, I must say!" said Delancy, shoving his hand into his pocket. "How've you been spending your money, Lightfoot—gambling? Or, didn't you have any to spend, in the first place? I always thought you were no better than a beggar, for all of your fierce pride; and now, don't y' know, I know it."

He pulled out a thick roll of bills.

From the top he took a fifty-dollar bill; and then produced two tens and a five.

These he threw at Jack, as if giving a favor to an outcast.

"The boat isn't—aw—worth it, Lightfoot; but as you seem to need money so deuced bad, y' know, I'll take pity on you and give you that for it."

Jack knew he could not restrain himself longer; and that if he stayed he should hurl himself on his insulters in a wild rage.

So he took the money and started for the door.

"The boat's yours," he said, hoarsely. "Come down and get it whenever you want it."

He hurried to the stairway and down to the street, with his face on fire, his heart hammering, and a great rage consuming him.

"Why is it that money makes such tyrants of some people?" he said, fiercely, as he passed out into the street.

He wanted to go back, now that it was over, and satisfy his just anger by whipping both Reel and Delancy. He knew he was equal to it, and the desire burned strong within him.

But he conquered it and turned homeward, though throughout the swift walk, for he did not tarry on the

way, his cheeks seemed blazing, so that even the cool wind off the lake could not take the fire out of them.

But he drove this feeling away in some measure, enough at least to hide it, as he mounted to his mother's room and placed the money in her white hands.

"Only seventy-five!" she said, with a little cry of surprise and regret.

"It was all I could get for it, mother."

There was not a tremor in his voice now.

"Jack," she said, and the tears came to her eyes, "it was awful good of you, to sacrifice your boat in that way; but it was dreadful for you to have to do it."

Then she kissed him lovingly on the cheek.

And somehow the hot anger that had flamed in his heart and the fierce indignation that had burned in his cheeks passed away under that loving touch of his mother's lips. And he was more than resigned to it all; even rejoiced that he had done what he did, and had withstood the wild desire that had surged within him to punish those contemptible cads as they deserved.

But when Lafe heard of it, the next day, he was indignant.

"Seventy-five dollars!" he cried. "Why, the scoundrel! I shouldn't have sold it to him for any such sum. I'm surprised that you did it."

But, then, Lafe did not know all that Jack knew.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE LOSS OF THE MONEY.

Jack was talking with Lafe, that next day, and telling him about the sale of the boat, when his mother called to him from her bedroom window.

When he went up there she held the fifty-dollar bill in her hand.

"I can't stand it to be in debt, Jack," she said, "when I have the money in the house to pay with. Take this and settle with the grocer and the druggist."

"All right," he answered; and took the money, which he placed in a manila envelope taken from her writing desk.

This envelope he dropped into an inner pocket of his coat, and went downstairs with it.

Lafe was out in the yard, talking with some boys who had just appeared.

Other boys were coming along the walk, followed, in the middle of the street, by Jerry Mulligan's horse and cart.

Delancy Shelton was with the newcomers, and with Delancy was Reel Snodgrass.



Delancy had come down to get his boat.

"I think I'll take it now," he said to Jack. "The lake looks fine this morning, and I thought, y' know, I'd like to see—aw—how much I was cheated, y' know."

"You'll find you weren't cheated," said Jack, leading the way into the yard.

"A pretty good-looking boat, y' know!" said Delancy, as he inspected it, willing now to praise it, since it was his.

Lafe lounged through the wide door of the shed room, looking extremely disgusted.

"If it'd had been my boat you'd not got it for that money!" he declared. "Jiminy crickets, it was robbery to offer such a sum, and Jack was a fool for taking it!"

Jerry Mulligan had backed his cart up to the gate and was waiting.

He came in now, leaving his horse and cart in the street.

"The iligant thing that ut is!" he asserted, as he looked it over. "Jack, bedad, ye'd ought to have kep' ut. Ut's the jewel av a boat, so ut is. Ut will show uts heels to annything av uts koind on the lake, I'm thinkin'. 'Tis a pity ye couldn't have kep' ut and raced ut, begorra."

"Maybe you think I can't race it as well as he can?" said Delancy, with some indignation.

"The loikes av me won't be quarrelin' wid ye," said the politic Irish lad, who was anxious to get all of the carting work Delancy might have to do; "but av yeez'd iver sane Jack flyin' beure the wind in boats not the half so good as this ye'd be dyin' to see him sind this wan along, so ye would. Maybe yees'll let him race ut fer ye sometime? Av yeez do, it's Jerry Mulligan will be bettin' his money on ut."

"You're ready, Jerry, I believe?" said Jack, who wished, more than any of these friends could, that he might have been able to keep the beautiful boat.

"The car-rt is in the street, Jack, me b'y! These fellys will help to git ut out."

A number of the boys gathered round the boat, preparatory to carrying it from the shed room to the cart.

They were having difficulty in lifting it; and Jack, throwing off his coat in his usual impulsive manner, laid hold with them.

Though Jack had put in double doors sometime before, the opening was still almost too small for the passage of the boat, and some time and much careful work were required to get it through without scraping off any of the new paint.

Jack helped Jerry and the boys to carry the boat to the cart and in stowing it there.

While he stood watching Jerry drive away, he suddenly remembered that he was coatless—that his coat was lying in the shed room, where he had removed it, and that the fifty-dollar bill was in an inner pocket.

He turned sharply round and hastened back, meeting on the way Reel Snodgrass and Delancy Shelton, and several other boys; one of them being Nick Flint, the boy with the Apache face and the Apache heart, and two others being young fellows from the Mildale nine who were in Cranford that day to see about some of the preliminaries of the ball game to be played on the morrow.

Jack hastened into the shed room, and saw his coat lying just where he had placed it, on the end of the workbench. Tom Lightfoot was still in the shed room, and so was Lafe Lampton.

Jack beheld the coat lying there, with a feeling of relief.

He went over to it and picked it up, running his hand into that inner pocket before putting it on.

His fingers touched the familiar manila envelope.

"It's all right," was his thought. "But that was a fool trick, for me to let it lie there that way and forget it!"

Though confident now that everything was all right, he could not resist the desire to reassure himself, by thrusting his fingers into the envelope.

He gasped with surprise, as he did so.

The envelope was empty!

Jack's face paled, as he took the envelope out to make sure of this.

He opened it, hoping he was mistaken.

But—the envelope was empty!

"Did—did you see anyone go near this coat?" he asked excitedly of Tom and Lafe, who were talking together near the door and had not been noticing him.

"Lost something?" said Tom.

"Yes—I have. I've lost some money."

Lafe's sky-blue eyes opened widely.

"Lost money? Somebody took it out of your coat? Jiminy crickets, who could have done it?"

He stepped quickly to the door and looked out, then ran to the gate and glanced at the boys who were streaming up the street, following Jerry's cart and the boat.

When he came back he found Jack almost dazedly hunting through the pockets of the coat, though sure the money was not in them.

"How much was it?" he asked.



"Anyone out there?" Jack inquired, in a low tone.

"No."

"Well, I don't mind telling you fellows; but it was fifty dollars of the money I got for that boat. Last night I gave it to mother—the whole of it. Just before Delancy came for the boat a while ago she gave me the fifty—it was a single bill—and asked me to pay the druggist and grocer. I threw my coat down here thoughtlessly, when I helped the boys get the boat out. It was in this envelope. Now it's empty."

Lafe stared at the envelope as if he fancied that could help him.

"Jiminy crickets!" he gasped.

Then he added slowly, as if he wanted to be sure:

"I saw Reel Snodgrass standing near the end of the bench, with his hand resting on that coat. He wasn't doing anything to it, so far as I saw. I wasn't paying particular attention, but I didn't see him do anything to the coat. Would he—but, of course, he would, if he got a chance! A fellow who would do some of the things he's done would do anything."

"Yes, now that I think of it, I saw Reel standing there, too," added Tom.

"But that doesn't prove anything," said Jack.

"No, it doesn't; that alone wouldn't prove anything. I saw Nick Flint over at this end of the room, close by the end of the workbench. That doesn't prove anything, either, for he may not even have seen the coat."

"But Nick Flint would steal," said Lafe; "and Reel Snodgrass has got two of the slickest hands that ever hung from any fellow's shoulders. I know that, and so do you; and I know that if he thought that money was in there he could get it without you knowing it or seeing him do it, even if you were looking at him all the time."

This was no exaggeration, for Reel Snodgrass was not only naturally nimble-fingered, but had been especially trained in sleight-of-hand work by the Hindoo magician, Boralmo, with whom he had first appeared in Cranford.

Still, this proved nothing.

"Those fellows from Mildale were near this end of the workbench, too," said Tom.

"Oh, several fellows were over there!" objected Lafe. "I was over there once, myself."

Jack felt stunned, dazed, and criminally culpable.

"The fault is mine," he admitted. "I was a fool to lay the coat down, with that big crowd in the room."

"I don't see how you're ever going to get that money back," said Tom. "Unless some one saw it

done, and will tell about it, the chances look pretty slim."

"There's no chance at all!" Jack was forced to admit.

But he was ready to retract this as soon as he took thought.

"But, see here," he added, "that was a fifty-dollar bill! Fifty-dollar bills don't come into my hands so often that that one wasn't a curiosity. So I looked it over. It was a bank bill, issued by the Manhattan Bank, of New York. I should know it if I saw it again."

"Would you know the number?" Tom asked.

"No. It was forty-six thousand and something. Maybe the number will come back to me. But I remember everything else about it, just how it looks and everything. I could swear to it, if I saw it again."

"Better speak to the storekeepers about it, then," was Tom's suggestion. "I'll go with you. It will be spent in this town, probably, or in Mildale. We'll send word to Mildale."

"I'll go along, too," said Lafe.

Then Jack called to his mother that he was going out, but would be back in a few minutes, and he and his two friends left the house.

## CHAPTER V.

### JACK FACES REEL.

Jack did not return as soon as he had expected.

As he took his way up the street with Lafe and Tom they met pretty Nellie Conner.

"How is your mother, Jack?" she asked.

She was dressed in white that day, with a knot of blue at her throat—a blue as heavenly as her eyes.

"She's better," Jack was glad to answer.

"Then it will be all right if I run in a while and see her?"

"Oh, yes; she'll be glad to see you. And, say?"

He turned again, after starting on.

"Can you stay a while with her, Nellie?" he asked.

"We've got an important matter to see about, which you needn't mention to her, and I'll feel that I can stay a little longer to attend to it, if you're there with her."

"I'll stay till you get back," she promised, and went on her way.

Before Jack returned some very interesting things happened.

The boys scattered, after reaching the principal street, and, having divided among themselves the stores and business houses to be seen, they set forth



to notify everyone of the loss of the fifty-dollar bill and to warn all against accepting it.

When Jack finished he was near the Cranford House, the hotel where Reel and Delancy were stopping.

The thought he had given to the matter since setting out from home was leading him strongly to the belief that Reel Snodgrass was the thief.

A further examination of the manila envelope had shown him that it was not the one he had taken from his mother's desk and put the money in. It resembled it, yet was not the same.

This proved that there had been a case of substitution—the empty envelope had been substituted for the one containing the money.

Another and even stronger bit of evidence, as it seemed to him, was that the envelope he had found empty in his pocket was identical in appearance with one he had received once from Reel, and he had seen envelopes something like it on Delancy's writing table.

So, when he found himself near the Cranford House, it occurred to him that it would be a shrewd move, if he went up there and announced to Reel and Delancy, as coolly as he could, how he had made the discovery of his loss and exhibit the empty envelope he had found.

It seemed that Reel must show some signs of confusion, if he were guilty.

Therefore, Jack mounted the stairs of the hotel toward Delancy's apartments without first sending up his name or a card.

When he reached Delancy's rooms he found one of the doors open, and Reel sitting there alone.

Jack at the moment would have preferred to see Delancy there also, thinking if Delancy knew nothing of the robbery, and Reel were guilty, the display of the envelope before Delancy would increase Reel's confusion.

"Delancy coming in soon?" Jack asked, stopping in the doorway.

Reel's sunburnt face colored.

"Haven't seen him," he said, gruffly.

But Jack went on into the room, just the same, for he had seen Reel slip something under a large blotter on the desk at which he was sitting. As it disappeared from sight Jack thought he saw the color of a manila envelope.

There was a chair near the end of the desk, and he dropped down into it without invitation.

"I must say you're thundering cool, Lightfoot!"

Reel exclaimed, angrily. "I've told you Delancy isn't here!"

"I'll wait for him."

"But he isn't coming back soon."

"I'll wait for him till he does come back."

Jack was outwardly cool, though his heart was thumping unpleasantly and his mind was moving rapidly.

"A warm morning," he said. "I suppose Delancy is out trying his new boat?"

"I don't know where he is, and I don't care."

"You came down to my home, and I've just returned the call," said Jack, cool as ice. "You can't object to my sitting here a minute."

"Not if you want to."

Jack tipped the chair back nonchalantly.

Reel, seeing that he meant to remain, took out a cigarette and struck a match to light it.

"Have one?" he said. "Oh, I forgot; you're one of the good little boys who don't smoke!"

"The reason I don't smoke cigarettes is not because I'm a good little boy, as you put it, but because I don't think they're good for me. It's just the same reason that keeps me from drinking coffee when I'm training for some athletic event."

He looked closely at Reel and at the same time let his hand rest on the blotter that covered whatever Reel had pushed hastily under it.

Reel either did not notice this, or thought it amounted to nothing. He scratched another match, for his first had gone out.

"It's too bad, Lightfoot, that you and I couldn't have got along together! You had every chance to make a friend of me when I came here, but you didn't care to do it."

"You're forgetting a few things, aren't you?" Jack asked, lifting his brows.

"I don't think I am."

"Well, I think you are! Let me name you a few things, just to stir your memory. When you came here with that Hindoo magician——"

"Wasn't that all right?"

"I'm not saying anything on that point. But when you came here you got on our nine, because I wanted to please Mr. Snodgrass, your uncle; and the first thing you did, in the very first game we played with you as a member, you gave away our signals to the captain of the Highland nine. That showed that you couldn't be trusted."

Reel flushed.

"Go slow, Lightfoot! You know I've insisted from



the first that that is a slander—that I never did anything of the kind. I still say it's a slender—a base slander; I never sold those signals, nor gave them away.

"And that just proves what I said," he went on. "I came here a stranger. Instead of treating me right you began by accusing me of treachery and dirt. You tried to disgrace me right at that time. And your conduct toward me has been of that same kind ever since."

He took out the little silver, coin-shaped disk, attached to a handle, which he had used before.

"When I showed you this, and told you how it came into my possession—how Borlmo gave it to me, and that it had come down to him through a long line of Hindoo jugglers, you——"

Jack smiled in a queer way; for, as he talked, Reel had set the metal disk to spinning on its handle.

"You might as well put that thing up, Reel. You fooled me with that once—got me to looking at it until I fell into some kind of a sleep or trance; but the thing won't work with me any more."

"I didn't intend that," said Reel, "but meant merely to recall some things to you."

"Reel, the reason we couldn't get along was that you were full of trickery. You began by trickery, there in that game with Highland, and you're still at it. See here!"

He drew out the thing from beneath the blotter; and, seeing that it was a manila envelope, he opened it with a single movement, and extracted—a fifty-dollar bill!

"You'll hand that here!" said Reel. "I put it there!"

"Oh, you did? I hardly thought you'd confess it."

Reel's sunburnt face had paled slightly, but he seemed otherwise not much disturbed.

"Why shouldn't I confess it? It's my money."

Jack looked quickly at the bill. It was a bill of the Manhattan Bank, of New York, and its number was forty-six thousand one hundred and forty-three. The bill that had been stolen from him was on the same bank, was a new fifty-dollar bill, and he recollected clearly that the number was forty-six thousand and something. So he was reasonably sure this was the same bill, and that Reel had taken it from his pocket in the shed room.

"You fork over that money!" Reel commanded.

Jack held it up, with the face of the bill toward Reel.

"Look at that, and say if it's your money; say if it isn't my money!"

Reel's quickness of movement has been mentioned. If he had not been as quick as thought in many ways he never could have become the sleight-of-hand performer that he was.

His hand moved so quickly now that the eye could hardly follow it; and before Jack knew the danger the bill had been twitched from his fingers and had disappeared.

Jack gasped and stared.

Reel smiled mysteriously.

"It's my money you were making so free with, and I propose to keep it. Find it if you can."

Jack looked at Reel's cuffs and his sleeves, which were rather large.

"You've got that in one of your sleeves."

"Have I? Well, it doesn't make any difference to you where I have it; it's mine. Perhaps you were going to accuse me of stealing it, for you said it was yours. Where did you get it?"

Jack felt somewhat queer, almost foolish. He had been outwitted by the clever rascal who sat before him. He saw a grin of satisfaction spreading over Reel's sunburnt face.

"Reel, I'll be frank with you; I can afford to, for I've already talked to you pretty plainly."

"Both of us have talked plainly," said Reel, grinning.

"Yes; but more of the truth won't hurt. Nothing seems to hurt you; you've got the hide of an alligator."

"Alligator is good!" said Reel. "Go ahead. No little mosquito like you can bore through my hide, anyhow."

"I got that fifty dollars in the payment for my boat last night, and you saw Delancy give it to me."

"Did he give you a fifty? I didn't notice."

"He gave me a fifty, on the Manhattan of New York, and I'm sure the number of the bill was a little upward of forty-six thousand. That bill I found here in this envelope under the blotter is numbered forty-six thousand one hundred and forty-three, for the same amount, on the same bank."

"I took that fifty-dollar bill given to me by Delancy, and this morning I had it in a manila envelope identically like this, in my coat pocket—this pocket, of this coat—in the shed room. That was when you and Delancy came for the boat. While helping to get the boat out I laid the coat down. When I came to put it on again the envelope had been taken, with the money, and this empty envelope was there in its place."

He showed the empty envelope.

"Several fellows were seen near the end of the



workbench where the coat lay. Somebody took that money."

"Why don't you go ahead? Why don't you say that I was standing there and I took it?"

"Well, *I think you did!*"

Jack half rose to his feet, for he expected that Reel would jump at him.

The only thing that Reel did, however, was to lean back in his chair and grin maliciously.

"If anybody but you had said that I might get mad. But I've such a contempt for you, Lightfoot, that it doesn't take effect at all. I told you that no little noisy mosquito like you could hurt me. And you can't. But I'll say this to you."

He held up his clinched fist and brought it down on his knee with emphasis.

"If you want to get yourself into red-hot trouble, just go round telling people that I stole your money and you'll get into it."

Jack felt that he was defeated, at least temporarily. He had no positive proof against Reel. Even the possession of that fifty dollars was not proof. And Reel had cleverly tucked the bill away where Jack could not get at it. He did not even know where it was.

Under some other circumstances Jack might have throttled Reel, and so have forced him to surrender the money right there.

He would have done it now if he had been sure of his grounds; but he was sure of nothing.

He merely said some further stinging words to Reel, and then started to go.

"Ta, ta, Lightfoot!" Reel called after him as he took his departure. "Come up and see me sometime when you want to have another pleasant little talk. The latchstring will be always out for you."

When Jack reached home and relieved Nellie Conner, Mrs. Lightfoot asked:

"Did you pay those bills, Jack?"

Jack had to turn his face away to hide his confusion, as he answered:

"Not yet."

"Well, don't forget them, Jack," she urged. "I'm anxious to have them paid at once."

What could he say?

It had always been his custom to tell his mother everything, and if she had been well he would have told her now; but he felt that in her weak condition he could not tell her.

"But if—if I can't get back the money," he thought, "I shall have to tell her, for she'll keep on asking me."

## CHAPTER VI.

### JACK'S STRUGGLE

No one loved a lively game of baseball better than Nellie Conner.

Nevertheless, she volunteered to remain with Mrs. Lightfoot while Jack went to Mildale to occupy the slab there for Cranford. Nellie was as kind of heart as she was beautiful of face.

"I don't know how I can ever pay you for this," was what Jack said to her.

And her answer was:

"Win the game; that's all."

Jack lingered until the last moment, not wishing to be away from his mother longer than he had to.

Hence the other members of the nine had gone on, riding over in a big wagon, with a number of the Cranford girls, among them Kate Strawn, who had with her the handsome shepherd dog, Rex.

As Jack came out of the house to start for the train, he saw Delancy and Reel Snodgrass come up from the boat landing in Delancy's automobile. The fact that they had been out sailing in the beautiful boat that morning caused Jack's heart to burn.

"It wouldn't be so bad," was his thought, "if I had the money for the boat."

The money was still missing. Lafe, to whom he had told the story of what had happened in Reel's room at the hotel, had advised Reel's instant arrest; but Tom thought it well not to move too hastily. What proof Jack had against Reel could hardly be called proof. It would not have had much weight in a court of justice. Tom argued that Delancy had other fifty-dollar bills, and would claim that the one Jack had seen in Reel's possession was one he had given him. And Jack could not have sworn that it was not.

As Jack started across the street above his home, on his way to the station, Delancy, as it seemed, tried deliberately to run him down with the auto.

Jack had to leap to get out of the way, and was almost struck by the big machine; and he heard Delancy and Reel laugh sarcastically as they sped on.

This did not make Jack feel any too good as he took the train for Mildale.

Delancy and Reel had started for the same point in the auto, and as it was speedy and the highway rather direct they would be there almost as soon as Jack himself.

Jack had never started to a game feeling quite as despondent as now. He had with the utmost difficulty been able to keep his mother in ignorance of the loss of



the money until this time, and had been compelled to shave the truth pretty closely to do so at all.

The loss of the money was the thing that distressed him. It was in his mind so much that he was hardly able to think of the coming game.

And he knew he was not in good condition for slab work, as he was still stiff and sore from his recent experiences in the icy rivers of the Maine woods. In addition, he had taken a slight cold there, and it troubled him now, causing at times a hacking cough and a shortness of breath.

Jack had about reached that deep slough of despondency from which he had at times great difficulty in pulling himself.

At such times he was almost willing to lie down and quit, and to ask himself: "What's the use?"

I suppose every boy feels that way at times. Things will go wrong in spite of our best efforts. The plans we make miscarry. The games we hope to win are won by the other fellows. The things we hope to do we do not seem always able to do. And so we become discouraged.

No doubt this is a good thing for us at times. If everything always came our way we should have altogether too high an opinion of ourselves. The most sensible young fellow in the world would probably, by and by, get a very bad case of the swelled head if fortune always favored him and he won out in everything.

Some boys give up when discouraged; and when they do, and do not start over, that is the end of them. That is proof that they haven't the stuff in them that strong men are made out of.

Jack Lightfoot had a hard fight on his hands as the train bore him toward the battle at Mildale. He wished he were not going; wished he had said he could not play that day.

But he fought the thing to a finish before the church spires and mill stacks of Mildale came in sight.

"This is foolish!" he said, to himself. "If the money is gone, it's gone. I shall have to tell mother about it, and then see if I can't find a way to earn another fifty dollars. And because I feel bad about it is no reason why I should go into a blue funk and help to lose the game to-day. I'm the captain of the nine. If the captain shows the white flag how can the other members of the nine be expected to have fighting courage? I'm stiff and sore, and I've got something of a cold; but none of those things are killing matters. I'll simply ignore them and go in to win, just as if everything was all right. And nothing I do or say shall let any fellow know I'm not in tiptop shape and good spirits."

When Jack made that resolve he had more than half won his hard battle.

When he alighted from the train and found Lafe and Tom and some others from Cranford awaiting him, among them Kate Strawn, he met them with a smile.

"It's a fine day!" he said.

And really the sky seemed to have brightened.

"A great day for the game," said Lafe; "and you bet there's going to be a crowd. They're already gathering. Hear that?"

The music of a band came floating up the street.

"The Mildale's are wild," Lafe went on. "They downed us before, you know, and they're sure they can do it again. Hear 'em yelling!"

Jack heard them—a wild chorus of triumphant cheers, that came ringing from the crowd that followed the band.

"When we got in," said Kate, "their nine were out on the diamond practicing. But we're going to win; for you see I've got the mascot fixed up great."

She laughed brightly.

If a glittering array of ribbons roped round the neck and body of a dog could bring victory, certainly the Cranford nine had a fair chance; for Rex fairly flashed in the sunlight.

Meeting these friends thus and hearing the defiant and confident yells of the Mildale rooters and ball players put iron into Jack's heart. He felt his courage and his pride stiffen. His fair face flushed and his gray-blue eyes shone.

"Fellows," he cried, and he felt the ring of resolution in his own words, "they're howling now before the game; but we'll try to see that they don't have much to yell about afterward."

In the midst of his friends he walked down the little street, through the heart of Mildale, toward the ball grounds.

He saw the band come flaring past, on one of the cross streets, and saw a parade of whooping boys and young men bearing the Mildale colors.

The people of Mildale yelled enthusiastically as the band and the colors went by.

Greg Silver came smilingly up to Jack and his friends.

"Gad! I was afraid you wouldn't come!"

"Why not?" said Kate.

Greg looked at her with a meaning laugh.

"On account of that last game, you know! We think we can do it again, too!"



"Oh, I hate that fellow!" Kate cried, as Greg passed on.

Jack almost felt, too, that he hated Greg Silver. He had no very high opinion of Greg, and there was something hidden and insincere now in Greg's manner and in his words.

As Jack and his friends neared the ball grounds, toward which the band was now making its way followed by a big crowd, Jack saw Greg conversing with Delancy and Reel.

The big auto had been drawn up close by the ball-ground gate, and Reel and Delancy, sitting in it, were talking with Greg, who stood on the ground.

Kate flushed a little when she saw this.

Kate had tried to think well of Reel and Delancy. It had, from the first, been rather strange to Jack that this should be so, for Kate was a very sensible girl. Yet he supposed that Kate must be influenced by her mother's attitude.

In addition to this, it had always seemed strange to Jack that Reel, especially, should be as popular as he was with the young people of Cranford. Was it because he was a nephew of Mr. Snodgrass, the banker; or was it because of Reel's ability and cleverness as an amateur magician? Often Jack had thought this last was the reason, for Reel was always showing some little trick or other to first this one and then that, for the purpose of gaining their friendship and increasing his popularity. But from the first, when Reel entered the academy as a student, the boys and girls, particularly the girls of the academy, had flocked round him.

At bottom, it was the romance of Reel's life that caused this. Reel was from far-off India, from Bombay, and that hinted of mystery and of strange things, which an ordinary American lad like Jack Lightfoot could know nothing about. Even the deep, dark sunburn of his face spoke of a life under the hot sun of the tropics.

Jack thought of Reel's strange popularity, as he watched him talking with Greg Silver, and he wondered what it was Greg and Reel and Delancy were talking about so earnestly.

He was to know more of that by and by.

## CHAPTER VII.

### GREG SILVER.

Jack Lightfoot always looked for treachery and crooked work when he and his nine came to Mildale.

The Mildale boys were a treacherous lot. Early in the season, when the Cranford nine were to play their

first game with Mildale, Greg Silver, who was then unknown to Jack, had come over to Cranford for the purpose of drawing Jack into a trap by trying to induce him to pay him for playing on the Cranford nine. He did not want to play on the nine, nor expect to, but simply hoped to prove that Jack was as crooked as he was himself.

And in the game before the last, a star professional pitcher, who passed under the name of Wally A. Reed, had been rung in by the Mildale nine to pitch against Cranford; a cheat that was exposed in a most humiliating way by the arrest of Reed on the diamond on a charge of a burglary committed in the city of Cardiff.

Jack wondered what new thing would be concocted to-day, if anything.

In the very latest game, when Cranford had been defeated, Mildale had apparently played fair, for the first time. The defeat had been caused then by Jack's unfitness to play and by a phenomenal young pitcher who had shot up suddenly from among the Mildale substitutes and had shown himself to be a wonder.

Jack saw this new pitcher now, as he walked into the grounds, for the wonder was out on the diamond throwing to some Mildale boys on the bases.

He was a clean-limbed young fellow, with a reddish face and light hair; a youth who was quick on his feet; and who, though he had no great curves, had speed and control, and had a good head with which to back up his work on the slab. Headwork counts for as much in the pitcher's box as anywhere else.

The Mildale brass band came into the grounds, playing its loudest, and behind it streamed a great crowd of men and boys cheering wildly and enthusiastically. Apparently Mildale was sure of another victory.

When the handsome collie frisked toward the grand stand fluttering his ribbons and with the word "Cranford" emblazoned on his sides, the Mildale rooters howled in derision, offering so offensive a display of their partisan feelings that Kate Strawn was provoked and made so angry that she glared at the offenders.

Thereupon they laughed at her and yelled and hooted all the more.

"I declare," she cried to one of the girls who sat by her, "if I haven't come to a ball game at Mildale for the last time! Why, they're perfectly insulting here to-day!"

"Oh, you'll come again," was the answering remark; "it would take a team of horses to keep you away from a ball game in which the Cranford nine took a part."

And that was pretty nearly so, as Kate knew.



Jack Lightfoot and the members of his nine were forced to submit to similar sharp displays of feeling on the part of the Mildale partisans.

They were hooted at as they walked toward the benches, coarse jokes were hurled at them, and questions that were calculated to produce bad feeling met them continually.

"A set of hoboes!" grunted Ned Skeen.

"Don't fret," said Lafe; "we'll have them laughing out of the other side of the mouth before the game is over."

The crowd continued to come, until not only grand stand and bleachers were filled, but a great mob was surging round the diamond, threatening to interfere with the work of the nines. Some special policemen, sworn in for the occasion, seemed to have hard work in keeping this crowd back, and now and then sharp words were passed and it looked as if there would be a clubbing of unruly heads.

The batting lists of the nines were given to the umpire:

CRANFORD	MILDALE
Jubal Marlin, rf.	Luke Armstrong, c.
Ned Skeen, ss.	Jake Peggotty, cf.
Tom Lightfoot, 2d b.	Walter White, rf.
Mack Remington, lf.	Bud Toliver, 3d b.
Wilson Crane, cf.	Greg Silver, 2d b.
Brodie Strawn, 1st b.	Sam Martin, lf.
Phil Kirtland, 3d b.	Millard Rice, p.
Lafe Lampton, c.	Anson Hogg, 1st b.
Jack Lightfoot, p.	Carl Peterson, ss.

Greg Silver, it will be noticed, was placed on second bag, when heretofore he had been catcher.

Millard Rice was the new and phenomenal pitcher that had shot up like a rocket in the Mildale nine and had made as great a reputation for himself there as Jack had for himself in the nine of Cranford.

But that is no new thing, nor remarkable; it is happening every season, and every week. The new men, as a rule, have simply been given a chance to show what was in them, and have made the most of their opportunity.

Jack rather liked the appearance of Millard Rice, for he seemed to be a clean sort of fellow, whose one ambition was to play good ball; a very different sort of chap from Bud Toliver and Greg Silver.

Silver, who was the captain, began to make himself

offensive almost as soon as the Cranford boys were on the benches.

He called Jack out, and when they had walked together to the end of the grand stand, he remarked with an evil grin:

"We understand that you fellows have been making a howl about us putting men on our nine who don't belong there, and had no right to be there."

"I hope you aren't looking for trouble to-day, Silver," said Jack, quietly.

"You'll give it to me, will you?"

"We'll certainly give you all you want, if you start it."

"But you did charge us with putting in professionals?"

"I thought everyone knew that you have done so. Wally Reed was not only a professional, but a thief, and you fellows declared on your honor that he was not a professional, but a resident of Mildale and an amateur."

"Well, then," said Silver, that wicked smile of his sharpening his rather sharp features, "how about the time you put Reel Snodgrass on your nine and played Highland with him, when Reel hadn't been in your town three days, and was a member of a professional nine in Bombay?"

"He's been telling you that; that's what you were talking about down at the gate!"

"Why don't you say it isn't so?"

"He lied when he said he was a professional, if he said that to you."

"He said it, and he ought to know best about that. But you can't deny that he had only been in Cranford three or four days?"

"Yes, that's right; but he had come to make a home there with his uncle and had been admitted as a student in the academy, and that made him eligible to the nine."

"Lightfoot, you fellows have been pretending to be a little better than the average run, and you're as bad as the worst. Jubal Marlin was paid twenty-five dollars to step out of the way and let Snodgrass play that day. Hereafter don't go to hollering round about how mean and dirty other nines are. That's all."



"Is that all?"

"It's all."

"Why did you rake that up, Silver? Just for the purpose of starting trouble here to-day?"

"Just to keep you fellows from feeling so honest that it hurts you."

Jack knew it was not that, and he was not feeling very quiet and even-tempered as he returned to the benches and the umpire announced that the game was to begin.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### "PLAY BALL."

"Hooroar! Haw, haw!"

Jubal Marlin laughed in his noisy way, as he walked out to the plate, swinging his two bats, and faced the pitcher left-handed.

"Here we air!" he cried. "The elephants go round and round, the band begins tew play and the circus begins. I'm the first clown tew hōp intew the ring."

He threw away one bat and held up Old Wagon Tongue.

Millard Rice stooped and rubbed his hand in the dirt in front of the slab.

As he rose he looked at Jubal as if sizing him up. He lifted one foot, gave his right arm a peculiar swing, and sent in the first ball.

Jubal did not strike at it; but it was over the plate; and when the umpire pronounced it a strike the rooters for Mildale tuned up and the band began again to blare its heavy music.

"By granny, if yeou send 'em as swift as that how'm I tew see 'em?" Jubal laughingly protested. "That come so gol-darned fast that it made a noise in my year like a bumblebee."

Millard Rice, trim and neat in his baseball suit, with his reddish face glowing and his light-colored eyes apparently half closed, lifted his foot again, swung his arm round, and again shot the ball over.

Jubal belted at it, and failed to connect.

The grin began to fade from his face.

"Oh, that pitcher's all right!" was Jack's thought, as he watched the work of the new slabman. "I think

I can learn a few things from him. For one thing, he doesn't hurry, but seems as cool as ice in summer time."

The ball came in again. None of three had been alike. This was a wide curve.

Jubal saw that it was wide, and did not strike.

"Three strikes—out!" shouted the umpire.

The drum of the band boomed with joy and the Mildale yell rose to the sky.

"By gravy, that was a foot frum the plate!" shouted Jubal, looking at the umpire. "I seen it, and it was a foot frum the plate!"

He pounded the slab with his bat.

The umpire grew red in the face.

"Do you want me to put you out of the game?" he demanded of Jubal. "Give me any of your slack and I will. Now, go to the benches."

Jubal dropped the bat limply.

"Howling mackerels!" Skeen was gasping. "Did you see and hear that? It was wide—away wide. That's robbery!"

Jack began to fancy he understood now what Greg Silver had meant.

The Cranford boys were to be held down from making protests, by the charge that they themselves were crooked and therefore they had no right to make a kick against crooked work from other sources. It began to seem that the umpire was loaded in favor of Mildale.

Jack began to wonder if this had anything to do with the talk seen between Greg, and Reel, and Delancy at the auto. Perhaps Delancy's money had been used to corrupt the umpire. There was no doubt in Jack's mind that Delancy would pay freely for a thing of that kind.

Ned Skeen came to the bat with a nervous jump.

Believing that the umpire would call the ball a strike anyway, he slashed at the first that came in, and for a wonder got a hit into left that took him to first.

Tom Lightfoot was up next, and had two strikes called on him; and Tom was a good man with the stick.

Skeen had been trying to steal, but the eagle eye of the pitcher kept him close to the bag.



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Phil got a hit by picking his ball.

Again the Mildale rooters were screeching like madmen, so great was their joy. They began to foresee another victory for Mildale, like the one of a few days before.

But reliable Lafe took up the stick.

Lafe stood it on end, while the pitcher was putting dirt on his hands—putting “germs on his paws,” little Gnat Kimball said—and taking a new ripe apple, a Gravenstein, from his pocket, Lafe deliberately bit into it.

There was method in Lafe’s madness.

His eccentric action set the bleachers to shouting and laughing and caused even the pitcher to smile.

Then the ball came in, a good deal of the speed taken out of it, and Lafe landed it so deep in center that it was a three-bagger, sending Kirtland in.

Reliable old Lafe made the round of those bags at a speed that was an eye-opener to people who fancied that he must be slow and clumsy.

This was the first good chance the little contingent of Cranford fans had had to display their feelings, and they made the most of it. They shook out the little flags they always brought with them, making a very flutter of gay colors, and yelled as wildly as the Mildale partisans had done; and the mascot, urged by Kate, barked as vigorously as if he understood what it was all about and thought that luck was coming his way.

Lafe perched smiling on third, and there proceeded to finish the apple he had bitten into.

And Jack Lightfoot was at the bat.

It was the desire of Millard Rice to strike out Jack Lightfoot; and he now used all his skill, sending two balls that seemed just alike, so far as the batter could judge from the motions of the pitcher’s “wind up”; but one of them was a regular air burner, it was so swift, and the other was so slow that it seemed to hang up in the air in front of the plate.

Jack, had, however, been watching the work of the new pitcher; and he had observed that nearly always, after sending one of these hot balls, he followed it with one of his slow ones.

Hence, Jack was ready for this slow ball. He saw

that it was what he expected, and he reached for it, slamming it as a grass cutter deep into left.

It gave him two bags and brought Lafe home; and again gave the Cranford fans a chance to shake out their flags and yell in wild jubilation; but the next man struck out.

The scores were tied—two to two; but no other run was made, for Jack failed to get home before the third man went out.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE CLOVEN FOOT.

“Fellows, we’ll pile up two more now, in our half of the inning,” was the confident assertion of Greg Silver, who was captain of the Mildale nine.

They had made two runs in their half of the first.

But they failed to make good; for Jack, ignoring his stiff arm and shoulder, and putting out of his mind the things that had distressed him, struck out three men straight, and retired the side without a single run.

The spectators were treated to some pretty pitching now.

Jack was getting back into form; and the pitcher of the Mildales, spurred to his best, did as pretty work as Jack did himself.

Three men went down before him—Ned Skeen, Tom Lightfoot and Mack Remington.

Then Jack again struck out his straight string of three.

Brodie Strawn then got a two-bagger, but never got off the bag, for Phil and Lafe were both struck out, and the ball that Jack popped off the bat was caught by the shortstop.

So it went for several innings, with the fans of Mildale and Cranford howling themselves hoarse as men went out, and the score sticking at that old two to two, which had been made in the first and second innings.

After that the umpire began to show the cloven foot and gave a run to Mildale which really was not earned.

He followed this in the next inning by giving them another.

With these tactics, when the seventh inning opened, Mildale had four runs to its credit and Cranford but two.



Trouble now arose.

Brodie Strawn was at the bat, and, drawing back to swing at the ball—he always drew far back and belted the ball with all his strength—he struck the catcher, who was too close up.

This touch against the arm of the catcher was not enough to hurt him, and it kept Brodie from hitting the ball.

But the catcher, who was none other than Luke Armstrong, and who had a physique like an ox, clasped a hand to his arm and spun round, claiming that Brodie had struck him purposely; and the umpire penalized Brodie by declaring that he was out.

"You did that purposely!" said the umpire, in an insulting tone.

Brodie's dark face flushed like fire.

He looked the umpire calmly in the eye.

"You're a liar!" he declared; and, though his voice was steady, the words seemed shot out as if from a gun.

"You're laid off," the umpire roared.

For a moment it seemed that Brodie meant to jump at him; and if that had happened a wild mix-up would have occurred right there, for some of the Mildale fans, scenting trouble, were pushing forward.

"You're out of the game—do you hear!" the umpire shouted. "You're penalized for speaking to me in that manner, and I retire you from the game. Lightfoot, put in a substitute."

"You're a grand scoundrel!" shouted Brodie, his face as red as brick dust. "And when this game is over I'll settle with you by beating your face off."

Jack saw a policeman, one of the special ones, whose sympathies, he knew, were all with Mildale, moving toward Brodie.

"Settle with him afterward," he said, stepping up and speaking to Brodie in a whisper.

Brodie gave him a dark look.

"I'm running myself, I guess!" he retorted; but he retired; and Jack put Bob Brewster in his place.

The best batter, with perhaps the exception of Jack himself, was out of the game.

And Brewster could not go to the plate in Brodie's

place now, for Brodie had been declared out before being penalized.

Phil Kirtland, angered and rattled by what had been done to Brodie, now struck out.

But reliable Lafe coming up again, coolly munching an apple, got two bags; and Jack, following him, sent him home like a leaping bulldog, with another two-bagger into right.

Then Jubal, with the greatest luck of his life, put a ball through the hands of the shortstop; and on that Jack came home.

Once more the score was tied—being now four to four.

But new trouble came. Phil Kirtland was put out of the game, in the second half of the same inning, because, as the umpire alleged, he disputed a decision.

Phil was playing third. He tried to get a ball that was coming low from center, and which, though intended for him by Wilson Crane, he saw would cross the line six or eight feet from the base, in the direction of second. A runner was coming from second at the same time; and Phil, in reaching out for the ball, collided with this runner.

He touched the runner with the ball, but the umpire declared that he interfered with him, and gave the runner the base; and made his decision with such a sharp tongue that Phil, who was a touchy youth and very proud, resented it. What he said could not be heard, but the umpire declared it an insult and ordered him out of the game.

This was another hard blow to the Cranford nine.

Jack put little Gnat Kimball in Kirtland's place at third; and, while Gnat was quick and lively, he was not much of a batter and Phil was good with the stick.

Jack began to understand the tactics of the umpire. One by one he was laying off the best players of Cranford, so that only the poorest players and substitutes would be in the nine in the closing inning.

Yet there was nothing Jack could do—not a thing.

If he began to protest he saw that it would be the very thing the umpire wanted. Already the umpire had spoken to him sharply several times and seemed to be seeking an excuse to lay him off.

"Fellows, just take your medicine," he urged.



"Don't answer back. Say nothing. He will lay off Lafe and Tom next, and me, too, if he can. We mustn't let him."

It was a most contemptible piece of business, and looked to be spite work on the part of the umpire; but Jack began to believe more strongly than ever that the umpire had been hired by Delancy Shelton's money.

## CHAPTER X.

### JACK'S LIGHTNING PLAY AND WHAT IT REVEALED.

Greg Silver, who had been playing second base for Mildale, wore a curious smile, when he saw the umpire lay off two of Cranford's best players.

"Oh, we've got 'em again!" he chuckled, screwing his mouth into a pleased grin. "We'll do 'em up in the next two innings."

Ned Skeen had been the last man at the bat in the seventh inning on the Cranford side, being caught out by the pitcher, knocking a hot ball straight into his hands.

That brought Tom Lightfoot up as the first batter in the first half of the eighth inning.

Millard Rice tried his best pitching tactics on Tom Lightfoot; but Tom planted a hit in right field, which enabled him to get first.

"Pap says that the way to do a thing is to do it," avowed Mack Remington, as he came to the rubber.

Nevertheless, Mack failed to do the thing; for the clever pitcher retired him.

Then Wilson Crane shambled into position, pointed his long nose at the pitcher, and held up his bat.

Wilson was not always reliable as a batter, though if he got a hit he could run like an antelope; but he secured a hit now that took Tom to third and himself to second.

Bob Brewster, filling Brodie Strawn's place, took up the timber.

Brewster was big and red-headed, a fine fellow, strong as an ox, but he could not always connect with the ball.

Jack longed for Brodie in that position now. With so reliable a batter as Brodie at the bat there was no doubt that Tom could be brought in.

Then—Brewster struck out.

He was followed at the bat by little Gnat Kimball, who was substituting for Phil Kirtland, whom the umpire had also put out of play.

And little Gnat, though he did the best he could by wiping the germs carefully from the bat with his clean, white handkerchief, could do no better than Brewster, and went down before the wonderful pitching of Millard Rice.

And the side was out, after Tom Lightfoot had got as far as third.

It was heartbreaking; and when Jack heard the Mildale fans roaring, and knew that the whole thing was due to the umpire, who had laid off those two good batters, his heart burned.

To make matters worse, a fit of coughing came upon Jack as he went into the box, and before he could control it and get into form, hits had been made and two men were on bases.

Jack subdued the coughing spell, and struck out two men.

But the third man got a two-bagger, which put the two runners over the home plate.

The Mildale score had gone up again, and now stood six to the four of Cranford.

Then the ninth inning opened.

But for the great effort he made Jack would have tumbled down now in another fit of the blues.

Seeing Greg Silver laughing and chuckling at second caused Jack to think of his talk with him and of his suspicion that Silver knew that the umpire had been bought with Delancy's money; and that took Jack's thoughts back to his mother and the sale of the boat to Delancy and the loss of the fifty dollars.

Yet he said to himself:

"This won't do—take a brace!"

He said the same thing to his nine.

It did him good to know that reliable old Lafe Lampton was to come first at the bat. The weakest batters had gone down in the previous inning.

Lafe walked out as before, lazily, and eating an apple.

It had come to the point now that whenever Lafe did that bleachers and grand stand roared with laughter.



Lafe set the bat up on end, and turning toward the bleachers winked one of his sky-blue eyes, and took another bite of apple.

This made the spectators roar louder than ever and even caused the pitcher to smile.

Lafe had the happy faculty of making himself a favorite wherever he was; and he did not mind if people laughed at him, if thereby he could score a point in his own favor. He even seemed to enjoy it.

He was grinning as he took up Old Wagon Tongue and faced the pitcher, who was again "rubbing germs over his paws."

Somehow, Lafe's antics at the bat always helped Jack. Lafe's optimism, together with his "don't-care-a-cent-ativeness," cheered him, warmed him inside, and made him feel like laughing. And a laugh is the greatest dissipator of the "blues" that was ever invented. Perhaps it was because Lafe knew that and knew Jack's moods so well that he went through those antics.

Lafe let the first ball go by, even though it was called a strike. It did not suit him, and he was a good waiter.

He let the next one go by, also; but it was so wide out that it was a "ball."

But the third, coming swift and right over the rubber, was what he wanted; and he landed it down against the ball-ground fence, with a great swing, and then leaped along the base line, running like a heavy-bodied bulldog.

He took second easily on that hit; and stood there, munching at his everlasting apple, as Jack followed him at the plate.

Millard Rice still had that wild desire to strike out Jack Lightfoot. He wanted that for a feather in his cap of victory.

He now again used quick changes in his delivery, alternating swift balls with slow ones and curves.

But Jack hammered him.

It was a hit into right; not so good a one as Jack had hoped to get; but it took Lafe to third.

It was up to Jack now to risk a good deal to get Lafe across the home plate.

So he began to creep daringly off first, drawing to himself the attention of pitcher and catcher.

He knew that Millard Rice was a hard man to fool, but he hoped to fool him, if Jubal Marlin, who was now going to the batter's place, was struck out.

Jubal came to the rubber laughing in his usual way and shouting to the pitcher to give him "easy ones."

For this the umpire called him down sharply.

Jubal knew a thing or two.

He found a ball he could bunt, and bunted it toward short and third, starting it so that if it had gone through it would have gone between them.

Before the ball started off the bat Lafe was running. Jack started for second at the same time.

Millard Rice here made one of those poor plays that the best player will make at times.

Running for the ball, with the shortstop also running for it, he collided with the shortstop and was thrown to the ground.

But he had the ball.

Seeing he could not get the ball home ahead of Lafe, he twisted round as he leaped up and sent it to second, to cut off Jack Lightfoot.

Greg Silver, second baseman, was out on the line to first, and crouched there to receive the ball, which was coming right into his hands; and in this position he blocked the way for Jack.

Jack knew he could expect no favors of the umpire; and, finding his way blocked by the crouching second baseman, he took a magnificent flying leap that promised to land him on the bag.

As he went thus over Greg Silver's head, Silver pitched forward in his effort to get the ball, and Jack, looking back as he took the leap, saw a manila envelope slide out of one of Silver's pockets.

In that fall Greg Silver let the ball get away from him, and it bounded on across the line.

With a leap Jack was off the bag, had scooped up the manila envelope, and regained the bag before Silver could get to him.

Greg was red-faced and discomposed.

"I think you've got something of mine," he said, as he threw to the catcher.

The Cranford fans were, as Jubal would say, "making the welkin ring," with their jubilant din because



Lafe had brought in a run and Jack had so cleverly taken second.

"Have I?" said Jack. "Identify your property and perhaps I'll give it to you."

He had looked inside the envelope and had seen that it contained a new fifty-dollar bill. He had not been able to see more than the number, 50, on one corner of it, but he was as sure as he could be of anything that this was the fifty dollars he had seen in Reel's room at the hotel in Cranford and that it was the same fifty which had been given to him by his mother and had been taken from his coat.

"Identify your property, and prove that it's yours, and I'll give it to you."

His face was flushed. All that had happened had come back to him like a flash.

"I demand my property," said Silver, belligerently.

"I haven't got your property; I've got my own."

"It's mine; give it to me."

"What is it?"

"That envelope, that fell out of my pocket; I saw you pick it up."

"What's in it?"

"Money."

"How much?"

"That's none of your business. I'll have you pulled if you don't hand it over."

Not much attention was being paid to this, if any, by the spectators, who were watching the batter, Ned Skeen, and the battery.

"I'll tell you what's in it," said Jack, drawing his bow at a venture, though pretty sure he could hit the target, "there's a fifty-dollar bill in it, on the Manhattan Bank of New York, numbered forty-six thousand one hundred and forty-three; which was given to you by Reel Snodgrass for dirty work to be done in this game."

The shot took effect—Jack had hit dead center.

Greg's rather sharp face became ghastly pale.

"That's a lie!" he said, hoarsely.

"Oh, no, it isn't; I know just what I'm talking about. And Reel stole that fifty dollars from me yesterday. I know what I'm talking about. Now, go ahead and hand me over to the police, and the whole

story of how you came to have the money will come out."

Jack was bluffing somewhat, for he did not know just the whole of that story; but the bluff was good enough for the time being; for just then Tom Lightfoot—Ned Skeen had been struck out—sent a grass cutter bouncing past second, and Jack left the base and started like a greyhound for third.

The bases were now filled.

Tom Lightfoot was on first, Jubal on second, and Jack on third.

Mack Remington came to the plate, his apple-red cheeks burning hotly, as he realized what he was up against.

Three men on bases, and he at the bat! It was enough to make his cheeks glow. And this was probably the last chance of his nine to do anything, for this was in the ninth inning!

The responsibility was too much for apple-cheeked Mack.

He swatted at the sphere once, twice, three times; and went out.

"Pap says that when you can't do a thing you can't do it, and that's all there is about it!" he exclaimed, in irritation, and threw down his bat.

Wilson Crane took it up and moved his long legs into place.

Two men were out; three men were on bases.

Yet Wilson never faltered.

He poked his long nose at the pitcher as if he would pry him open with it and thus learn the character of the balls that were to be sent in. He spread his long legs apart to steady himself, and held his bat ready.

Millard Rice also knew as well as anyone just what now depended on himself.

He must either strike this batter out or give him such balls that he could not get a safe hit.

But here was the one weakness of Rice, good pitcher that he was. The great responsibility now resting on him affected him somewhat as it had done apple-cheeked Mack Remington. He felt himself trembling, while his heart and his arm seemed to grow weak.

Nevertheless, he wound up in his old way, noting



that the howling spectators had become as still as death, and sent the ball over.

Wilson Crane's big eyes saw just how it was coming, and with a mighty effort he landed it deep in center.

A wild howl broke forth from the spectators, as Wilson moved his long legs toward first and all the base runners came jumping over the lines.

Jack Lightfoot came in from third.

Jubal Marlin came in from second, crowing like a victorious game rooster.

Tom Lightfoot, running like a greyhound, reached third and started for home.

The Cranford fans and nearly everyone else were on their feet howling. Flags waved and Rex barked wildly. Even Kate Strawn, her cheeks like peonies, was standing on her feet, swinging her flag and fairly screaming.

The ball was coming in.

The center fielder was a strong thrower, and he sent it shooting like a rocket toward the home plate, paying no attention to Wilson Crane, who was moving his long legs like the speeding legs of an ostrich.

"Slide!" Jack yelled to Tom. "Slide—slide!"

Tom Lightfoot threw himself in a headlong slide that simply plowed up the dirt and the dust on the base line.

The ball thumped into the hands of the catcher, who had run out to get it.

But Tom was safe; everyone could see that; and the crooked umpire dared not say otherwise.

Wilson, trusting in the fleetness of his long legs, started from third for home; but Armstrong now threw to third, and Wilson, being caught between third and home, was cleverly put out.

But it had been wonderful work—wild and yelling; and diamond and bleachers, grand stand and ball field, were one mass of howling people.

"Three runs!" said Jack, panting out the words.

"Four," said Lafe, thumping himself dramatically on the breast; "don't forget me! I made a run, even before you did. So I'm at the head of the class."

It took a long time for the fans to cool down after that, and they were still howling when the Cranford

team went into the field; for when Wilson was put out that retired the nine.

The Mildale nine were a rattled set of young fellows when they came to the bat.

Greg Silver, their captain, was so worked up that he did not again say anything right then to Jack about that money in the manila envelope. He was busy trying to put some iron into the hearts of his scared men.

"Fellows, we can do 'em yet! Get into gear! Don't show the white feather! Sure, we can do 'em! Haven't we got the whole of this half of the inning? We can tie it anyhow, and make it a ten-inning game, and then flax them. That was just luck; and it won't happen again. They're only two runs ahead of us. We've got six runs to their eight. We're all right; we can do 'em, all right."

But—

Three men came to the bat, panting, pale and excited; and they went down now before Jack's phenomenal pitching like grass before the mower's scythe.

Again the Cranford fans were yelling, screaming, howling; and the ribboned shepherd dog was jumping and barking round his pretty mistress, Kate Strawn, as if he, too, understood what it was all about and was as overjoyed as his human companions.

And perhaps he did know, for some dogs are wonderfully intelligent.

## CHAPTER XI.

### CONCLUSION.

Jack saw Greg Silver waiting for him out behind the grand stand after most of the spectators had gone away.

The umpire had been one of the first to hurry from the ground, and he had gone with a crowd of people, fearing that hammering which pugnacious Brodie Strawn had threatened.

Jack went out to where Greg was standing. He wanted to know just how Greg had got hold of that fifty-dollar bill. It was numbered forty-six thousand one hundred and forty-three; and so was the same one Jack had seen in Reel's room.

What Greg wanted was the fifty dollars. And he said so, with hot words, as soon as Jack appeared. He



had been given time to think, and he intended to deny that he had received the money from Reel.

"You don't get it!" Jack declared; and with sharp words told him why.

"Let me see that money," said Greg.

"Not on your life."

Greg jumped at him, with an oath. It was just the thing Jack wanted, and he promptly knocked him down.

Greg came at him again, angered and murderous.

Jack knocked him down again.

Then he sprang on him, catching him by the throat.

"Tell the truth—the whole truth," he said, "or I'll choke your treacherous heart out!"

Greg wheezed; then began to beg.

"Let up!" he gasped.

"Tell me the truth about it—tell me the truth!"

"Ye-s, y-yes!" Greg gurgled.

Jack released his hold somewhat, but did not let the young scoundrel rise.

"What—is it—you w-want?" Greg gasped.

"You got that fifty dollars of Reel Snodgrass?"

"Y—yes!" Greg admitted.

"What were you to do for it?"

Jack tightened his grip.

"L-let up; you're—cho-choking me!"

"All right; out with it. What were you to do?"

"Well," Greg sputtered, hardly able to speak, "I was—was to g-give it to the umpire."

Jack partly released his hold.

"Other money had already been paid him?" Jack guessed.

"Y-yes."

"And this fifty was also to be given him?"

"Yes."

"But you thought you'd keep it for yourself?"

"Y-yes—yes; let up, can't you?"

Jack let up.

"That's all," he said. "It's my money—stolen from me by Reel, and I'll keep it."

Reel had himself now come upon the scene, accompanied by Delancy, and with them were several of Jack's friends.

Reel heard Jack's words.

"It's a lie!" he cried, dramatically.

Jack took out the fifty-dollar bill, and held it up so that all could see it, as Greg Silver climbed in humiliation to his feet.

"Greg had it. It was mine, and it is mine now; and he's told me how he got it. He says that Reel gave it to him to pay to the umpire for ruling against Cranford in this game; but that he intended to keep it himself."

"That's a lie!" shouted Reel, turning pale.

"Silver," said Jack, laughing, "your friend Reel Snodgrass repudiates you; he says you're a liar and that he never gave you this money."

"It's him that's the liar!" shouted Greg Silver. "He knows that he did."

"There's one other thing, fellows," said Jack, coolly, now that he had regained the money, "this money was stolen from my coat pocket in the shed room at my home. If Reel Snodgrass gave it to Greg Silver, as Greg says, I leave it to you to judge where Reel got it himself."

"The whole thing's a lie!" snarled Reel, in a rage.

Lafe and some other of the Cranford boys laughed sarcastically.

"Believe those fools if you want to," shouted Reel, in a rage.

"Aw—they're a poor lot, don't y' know!" said Delancy, plucking at Reel's sleeve. "They aren't worth noticing, don't y' know. Come on!"

And he led the way to his automobile, into which he and Reel tumbled hastily.

Then Lafe and the Cranford boys laughed again, long and sarcastically, as Reel and Delancy fled away in the red devil automobile.

#### THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 27, will be "Jack Lightfoot's Iron Arm; or, How the New 'Spit' Ball Worked the Charm." You will find this another lively story of the diamond, filled with quick surprises and a big baseball interest. No boy who likes baseball can afford to miss reading it. Jack and his time-tried friends are as human and interesting as ever in this story, and Tom proves himself to be considerable of a hero. Look out for it. Next week.



# A CHAT WITH YOU

Under this general head we purpose each week to sit around the camp fire, and have a heart-to-heart talk with those of our young readers who care to gather there, answering such letters as may reach us asking for information with regard to various healthy sports, both indoor and out. We should also be glad to hear what you think of the leading characters in your favorite publication. It is the editor's desire to make this department one that will be eagerly read from week to week by every admirer of the Jack Lightfoot stories, and prove to be of valuable assistance in building up manly, healthy Sons of America. All letters received will be answered immediately, but may not appear in print under five weeks, owing to the fact that the publication must go to press far in advance of the date of issue. Those who favor us with correspondence will please bear this in mind, and exercise a little patience.

THE EDITOR.

My measurements do not just tally with a list I saw in a paper some time back, and I write you this to learn what is wrong. I am 17 now, and 5 feet 9 inches tall. I weigh 161 pounds, being all of 13 more than I did last year. Am I too fat? Some of the fellows joke me, and say I'll be a second Grover Cleveland or Secretary Taft. Well, I answer that I'd be willing to take the flesh if I could be sure of as weighty a brain as either of them have. Around the chest I am 39 inches, and 33 inches at waist. I like athletics, and if I thought it was good for me, I'd go in more heavily. Please answer in your Chat columns, and oblige,

Cleveland, Ohio.

You are surely "all in," Sandow. For a lad of seventeen, one hundred and sixty-one pounds is a pretty fair record. Evidently you have a husky appetite, and enjoy the good things of life. Yes, take to all athletic sports moderately. Such things are certain to do you good, and with such a fine physique you should make your mark in more than one line of athletic competition. Eat less fat producing food, and indulge freely in baseball, as well as all sports that build up the muscular system.

I thought I had read good yarns of boys' athletic sports in another juvenile weekly that has been taken in our family for over nine years, and they certainly were very clever; but, to tell the truth, I'm thinking Mr. Stevens has them all beat to a finish without even that one exception. Did he ever write boys' stories before the ALL-SPORTS was started? If so, I'd like to know what they are, so I might get some of the same. He just knows a boy from the ground up. That's the greatest point about these Cranford stories. You just seem to know every one of the characters as if they were real fellows. And, somehow, you can't help liking Jack and Tom and Lafe—yes, and a lot of the others, like Gnat and Wilson Crane. I hope your paper will have a long life, and that Maurice Stevens may always write for it.

RAYMOND BENTON LA FARGE.

New Orleans, La.

You may be sure that the talented author of the ALL-SPORTS stories has written many others, but they were published under another name. He has made a close study of the American boy as met with in cities and country towns, his likes and dislikes, his favorite sports, his weakness as well as his sturdy traits of character, and this series of lively stories of athletic pursuits is the result of his long years of personal contact with the youth of our land. His main object is to upbuild rugged characters and develop healthy minds in healthy bodies.

Seeing that a good many of your readers send in their weights and measurements, to receive advice on the same, I am taking a shy at it too. I am 13 years of age, but pretty tall, they say. My dad says I'm thin, but that I'll fill out when I've got

my full growth. Is that so? I stand just 5 feet in my stocking feet and weigh 103 pounds. Around the chest I measure 32 inches, lacking a trifle; 18 inches around the largest part of the upper leg, and 11 inches around the calf. If I can do anything to increase my weight, please let me know. I take ALL-SPORTS every week, and would sooner go without my dinner than miss a number.

JAMES E. ROBERTSON.

Duluth, Minn.

Considering the fact that you are just at the age when your growth takes on a swift turn your weight is not bad. Don't worry about it, but take plenty of outdoor exercise, and eat heartily of good food. After a while you will begin to fill out. We hope you may never have to do without your dinner on our account, but it pleases us to know that you think so much of ALL-SPORTS.

I don't know whether you have many girl readers of ALL-SPORTS or not, because I suppose you think your weekly is taken principally by boy readers. But at our high school here we have a good athletic association, and we girls are as much interested in the success of our teams as are the boys. We go to all the games and encourage the boys as well as we can. In order to understand something about the games I bought a copy of ALL-SPORTS, and I found it so interesting that I got my little brother to buy it every week for me. After I read it, he takes it and sometimes we have to pry him off the pages of these fascinating stories in order to get him to come to his meals. I wrote a little poem about ALL-SPORTS, which I inclose. I hope you will think well enough of it to publish it.

The whirl of a bitter tempest,  
The wind that bringeth snow,  
And the last of the brown leaves flying  
Like the beaten before the foe.  
But sweet is the peace of the fireside,  
And we care not what may hap,  
While brother is sitting and reading,  
With ALL-SPORTS safe in his lap.

The girls are droning their lessons;  
From the room beyond floats in,  
Soft as an angel's whisper,  
The note of a violin.  
A boy is reading a weekly,  
And his interest is upwrought,  
For he's reading a bully good story  
In the pages of fine ALL-SPORTS.

MABEL TRUMBULL.

We are beginning to believe that we do not understand the girl of the present generation, for we are daily learning, with much surprise, that we have many girl readers of ALL-SPORTS. We are glad of it. It is certainly a condition of affairs worthy of the highest praise when the girls of your school, dear Miss Trumbull, feel so interested in the athletic prowess of your boy schoolmates that they take the trouble to read up on the subject of sports in order to more fully appreciate the achievements of their boys. We feel highly gratified that you should find ALL-SPORTS interesting in itself, apart from its value as a source of information. Your poem is very good, indeed.

I have at last settled down to write you of my admiration for your fine weekly. Although I am only a reader from No. 9, I think it is the best weekly published, and want to tell you that I admire it highly. Next to Jack, I like Lafe; then Tom, then Skeeny, then Saul, then Bob Brewster, then Wilson Crane, and, last of all, Phil Kirtland. Phil is a good deal of a snob, but I really like him for all that. He's a little sore, as who wouldn't be; but I think he'll see Jack's good qualities in time, and then



things will be better. I will close, wishing Mr. Stevens good health and hoping the Winner Company has every success,  
Portland, Me. STANLEY BRINK.

We are glad to learn, Stanley, that although you have been reading ALL-SPORTS for so short a while, you have found it so much to your satisfaction. Your remarks about Phil will meet with wide approval, for although Phil has made many enemies by his foolish conduct, very many readers of ALL-SPORTS not only are willing to excuse him, but many sympathize with him in view of the fact that almost any boy would be irritated to be suddenly forced into competition and defeated by an unknown, after having been leader for a long time. Phil has undoubtedly excellent qualities, and we hope that in time he will let his better nature guide him.

I have been reading ALL-SPORTS for the last ten numbers, and must say that I think they are fine. Jack is an ideal American youth. I wish I was as strong and healthy as he. Can't Jack and his friends come to our town this summer? I would like to see the Cranford nine play baseball. Thanking Mr. Stevens for his fine works and your firm for publishing this weekly,  
Templeton, N. J. MAURICE CRAWFORD.

If you really want to be as strong and healthy as Jack, dear Maurice, you must adopt Jack's methods of self-improvement. Jack was not always as strong and clever as he is now, and he attained his present condition only by hard work. Follow his example and you will have cause to envy no boy. The many friends of the Cranford boys seem anxious, every one of them, to have the boys visit their native towns. We doubt if the summer has days enough to enable the boys to accept one-tenth of the invitations. What their plans are we cannot say, but we are sure your invitation is highly appreciated. Mr. Stevens will be gratified at your compliment, and we value highly your kind reference to the publishers.

Allow me to thank you for the many pleasant hours I have spent with ALL-SPORTS. I have read all of them except No. 7, and I would like to have you send me that for the stamps inclosed. I admire Jack Lightfoot very much, and I think that Phil Kirtland is the lowest kind of a boy, a fellow who seems to be all right and then turns dirt. I have met fellows like him, who won regard for their clothes, but when it came to their heads, they were not in it, got sore when they were found out, and played low-down tricks. I have no use for such fellows. Do you think cold baths in the morning are good? What do you think of my measurements? I am 5 feet 6 inches tall and weigh 140 pounds. My chest measure is 35 inches; my waist, 29 inches, and my calves, 14 inches. Do you think I am too thin?  
Richmond, Va. ALBERT PRIGLEN.

Don't worry about your weight, dear Albert, because you weigh about twenty pounds more than the average boy of your height. Your chest measure is two inches under the normal and your waist measure an inch above. Calves are normal. A little general exercise to put more girth about your chest and shade off about the waist is what you need. As for cold baths, they are excellent, and should be taken by everyone who has the opportunity.

Do you care to receive a letter from one of the older readers of ALL-SPORTS? I am way up here in the capital city of the "Old Granite State," the home of the great Daniel Webster. Although he never made his home in this city, his birthplace was so near here that we can almost claim him. He was among the orators of our country what ALL-SPORTS is among boys' publications to-day—the greatest. First, I must tell you how I came to read ALL-SPORTS. I had a little nephew whom God had granted but a short and feeble tenure on life; he was ever ill and unable to live as other boys, although he longed to do so. A friend sent him a copy of the first number of your library, and I read it aloud to him. It pleased him greatly, and ever after, until his passing into the Great Beyond but a few short days ago, I read and reread all the numbers published. Many a weary moment, while waiting for the end, ALL-SPORTS has

cheered a little dying boy and his older companion. I am older than most of your readers, I suppose, and so can see many things in the stories which they cannot see. I know something of life, have seen both the good and the bad, and I know something of the difficulties and temptations which beset our way; so it is good to see a story that always makes it a point to make the boys love healthy sports and kindliness, and the things that make a boy manly. Jack and his friends are all brave, manly fellows, the healthy seed from which the future righteous citizens of this country should spring. Jack's motto seems to be that which I first heard long years ago: "Thou must be that which thou oughtest to be; and unless thou art that, thou shalt be nothing." If the fellows don't know where to go this summer, send them to Concord, and I will take them personally to the home of Webster in Franklin, his birthplace in Salisbury, and show them his statue in the state house grounds here. We will go to Lake Winnepesaukee—"The Smile of the Great Spirit"—and up through the White Mountains. I am proud of the "Old Granite State"; for, though small, she has left her mark in history, and, best of all, "that's where I live." Best wishes to Mr. Stevens and to ALL-SPORTS,  
Concord, N. H. SENECHUTE.

Your letter is very interesting, and we feel sure that the Cranford boys would like to visit Concord, the lakes and the mountains, under your guidance. To learn that ALL-SPORTS has been the solace to your boy friend in his final illness is very pleasant to us, and the more so, since it won for us a reader of your age and experience. We founded this library in the belief that it was really needed for the American youth of the day. The favor it has met with from the boys themselves, and the approbation of observers like yourself, have well vindicated our belief. Permit us to thank you for your interest.

Being an ardent admirer of your weekly, ALL-SPORTS, I take great pleasure in writing this letter to you. After reading so many letters of praise from your readers, I thought I ought to join in with the rest. I would like to shake Mr. Stevens by the hand and tell him that I thought he was the cheese, as the boys say. The characters, all of them, whether good or bad, are true to life and strongly drawn. I have seen some letters attacking certain of the characters and advising the author to drop them from the stories. That does not seem sensible to me, because the stories would not seem interesting if all the boys were good fellows. You need some bad ones to keep the good ones from growing stale. While certain of the characters, like characters in every town, make all good fellows sick, and are so bad or so mean that they ought to get off the earth, still, they are on it, and if we murdered them we should probably swing. Now, while the author could not be punished by the courts for killing any of his characters, still, if he did kill them, the story would lose its interest, which would mean its death. So, it seems to me, real life and story writing work out about the same, anyway. Best wishes to all concerned,  
West Orange, Mass. HENRY STEBBINS.

Your letter is very interesting, Henry, and your remarks on the necessity of bad and foolish characters to make the story real are certainly strikingly put. How much real life and story writing are alike in the punishment of crime we are not prepared to say. Indeed, we are singularly free from actual and fictitious murder.

I thought I would write to tell you how much I think of that ALL-SPORTS WEEKLY of yours. I think it is all right, and I have read every number published. Up here in the Bronx we have a little club in our neighborhood, and although, of course, the Bronx is not like Cranford, still we go in for a lot of out-of-door sports and have a fine time. I have been training in a gymnasium with some other boys, and I think I am in pretty good condition. What do you think? My height is 5 feet 6 inches and my weight is 121 pounds. My chest expansion is 35 inches; waist measure, 27 inches; hips, 34 inches; calf, 13½ inches.  
New York City. PETER KOSSUTH.

Your measurements are excellent, Peter, and we are glad to learn that you have gone in for scientific training. We hope your club is successful.



# HOW TO DO THINGS

By AN OLD ATHLETE.

Timely essays and hints upon various athletic sports and pastimes, in which our boys are usually deeply interested, and told in a way that may be easily understood. Just at present baseball is the topic in hand, and instructive articles may be found in back numbers of the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, as follows: No. 14, "How to Become a Batter." No. 15, "The Science of Place Hitting and Bunting." No. 16, "How to Cover First Base." No. 17, "Playing Shortstop." No. 18, "Pitching." No. 19, "Pitching Curves." No. 20, "The Pitcher's Team Work." No. 21, "Playing Second Base." No. 22, "Covering Third Base." No. 23, "Playing the Outfield." No. 24, "How to Catch." (I.) No. 25, "How to Catch." (II.)

## HOW TO RUN BASES.

No feature of the game of baseball to-day goes further in justification of calling the game scientific in contrast to the old-fashioned game than the treatment accorded the base runner, the acknowledgment of his supreme importance, and the making of every play on the field in aid of him. In a scrub game among small boys to-day the conditions that prevailed in a professional game a good many years ago are illustrated. When the small boy gets at the bat he swats with all his might at any ball he thinks he can hit and then runs for it. Another small boy takes up the bat, and no further attention is paid the first small boy, except to get him off first in order that the second small boy may get on the run, too. These happy events brought about, nobody worries about the boys on bases, and they simply move along whenever the batter gives them an opportunity. They try their best to get home; but if the inning closes with them on bases, well, nobody worries much about it. Although, of course, the old professional game was not conducted on quite so free-and-easy principles, it was wonderfully loose, for all the big playing made in those days, in contrast to what it is to-day.

In the game to-day, the importance of base running cannot be overestimated. In addition to the fact that a good steal always brings out the fans in fine form, and thereby worries the opposing team, base steals are of considerable importance in the score. Many a game has been won by the happy passage over that little strip of dirt path that lies between the cushions. The opposing team's pitcher, let us say, is steady and cool, hits are few, nothing seems to feaze them and the game seems theirs; but all the same, two or three cleverly worked steals will not only be the only thing possible to retrieve the game, but it will do more to upset the opposing team than anything else. They will naturally get nervous, and then the fighting team will have things its own way.

If two teams are equally matched, the one on which there are the most first-class base thieves will win. At the same time, base running does not consist altogether in base pilfering. Stealing is a by no means unimportant feature, but it is not everything. From the moment the batter becomes a runner, no matter how he became a runner, he becomes, in the thoroughly up-to-date game, not a feature secondary in importance to the batter who has replaced him, but the most important man on the field. To help him gain ground is the one purpose of the entire playing force. He is IT, and he should command the aid of everyone in his team who is in the game.

The winning of first is of vital importance, and every

effort should be made to reach the point from which runs begin to count. The start counts for much, and every batter should study the art of getting into motion at the quickest possible time and at the highest possible speed. Get there—by a bunt or short infield or anyway—but get there. "Running it out" is one of the most abused features of the game, but it is the most important part of a runner's work and should never be neglected. You never can tell when an accident, or some misplay, will give you the opportunity to reach first and possibly second. First is worth a lot of chances. Nothing is lost by running, and sometimes a great deal is gained by it. "Look for all you can get and get it" is the motto of the base runner.

Suppose the runner is at first. He looks ahead and tries to size up the situation at second. The first thing is to find whether second or shortstop is to handle the ball; a bluff run will show that, by either a throw from the catcher or the start of the players. He then signals the batter that he will run for it with the next pitched ball. Getting as good a start as the pitcher's motion permits, he is on the way to second. The batter, knowing by the runner's feint which player must leave his place to handle the throw from the catch, hits the ball, if possible, through the vacated place for a safe hit, which would otherwise have been an out. By these tactics the runner has not only opened up the way for himself, but for the batter as well.

As for getting onto second when the play is close, that is a problem every player encounters pretty nearly every time he plays. The safe rule is to make your every move, as base runner, exactly opposite to that of the baseman. Suppose a throw is coming low and straight into second; the runner should come in behind the bag, so that the baseman must turn round to tag. It only takes a fraction of a second, but in that fraction the runner may have made his slide. Sliding is nearly always necessary, and is an art in itself, learned only by practice. Some men slide feet first and some dive in head first. Head first seems to us the best; it gives you a longer reach, and you're less liable to injure your opponent. To slide in feet first when you wear spiked shoes is very dangerous. Still, it must be said that the very element of danger makes it effective, for when the baseman sees a double ridge of gleaming spikes coming his way at a tremendous speed he is more apt to dodge and play late rather than suffer severe injury. At the same time, spiking accidents always make a bad impression.

When second is gained, the runner is in a fairly easy position. As a rule, stealing is rare, because a base hit counts as much in nearly every station, whether the runner is at second or at third. He has a fairly easy chance to bring about a steal, as the pitcher's back is turned toward him. When he reaches third, his duty to his team is practically over. He can move along the home line to jolly the pitcher, but care is necessary.

And now so much has been said on the theory that little space remains to speak on more individual features of playing the game. The things that count are a quick start, speed between the bags and the slide at the end. Train for starting and running. Every other player practices the work of his peculiar position, but seldom, if ever, do the members of the team consider their duties as base runners, and train for that as well as for their other positions. Practice running, making a quick start and sliding. And study the game.



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